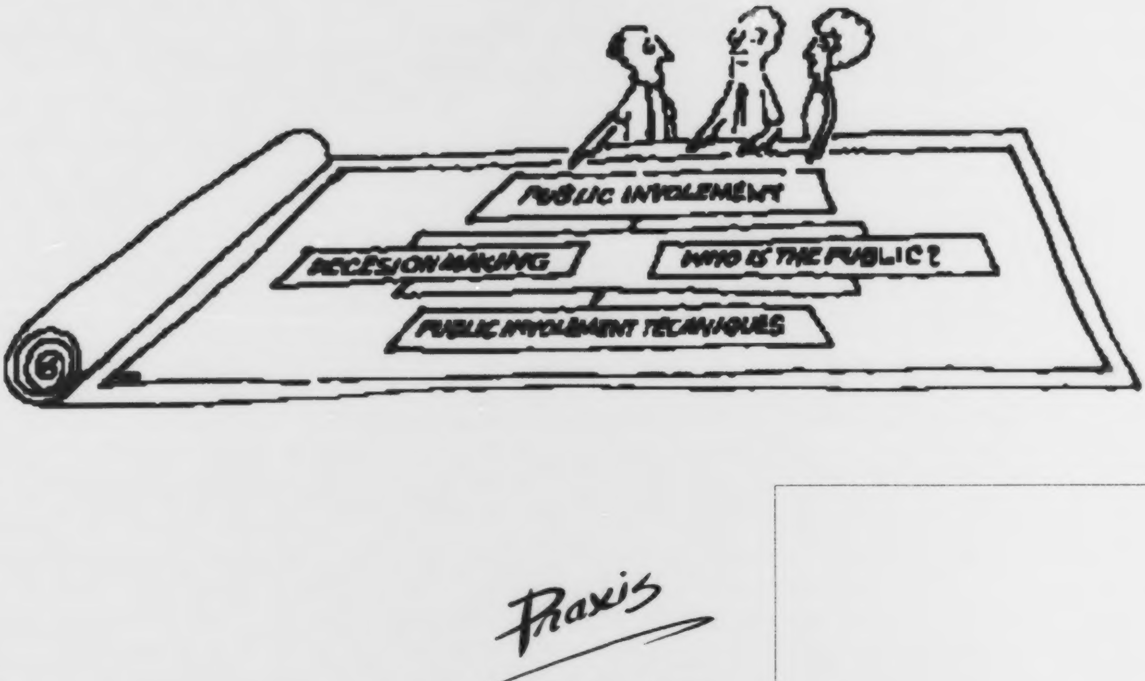
PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROGRAMS

Executive Overview


PUBLIC INVOLEMENT
DECESION MAKING
WHO IS THE PUBLIC?
PUBLIC INVOLEMENT TECHNIQUES

Praxis

Calgary, Alberta
1988

The Federal Mandate for Public Involvement

The Federal mandate for public involvement is contained in the Environmental Assessment and Review Process Guidelines Order, 22 June, 1984. This order specifies that the initiating agency shall:

- ☐ "consider the concerns of the public regarding the proposal and its potential environmental effects." Section 4 (1) (a)

- ☐ "use a public review under the Process as a planning tool at the earliest stages of development of the proposal rather than as a regulatory mechanism and make the results of the public review available for use in any regulatory deliberations respecting the proposal." Section 5 (2)

- ☐ "ensure that the public have access to the information on and the opportunity to respond to the proposal in accordance with the spirit and principles of the Access to Information Act." Section 15 (b)

INCREASING SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION MAKING

In September, 1987, the National Task Force on Environment and Economy released its final report outlining recommendations towards integrating environmental and economic decision making. The report was developed through a multipartite consultation process involving a broad range of public, private and educational representatives of Canadian society. One of the Task Forces' recommendations was that "government, industry and non-government organizations should use multi-partite processes to deal with specific issues, projects or programs."

It is in the context of this trend towards increasing consultation that this manual on public involvement has been prepared. This overview introduces senior decision makers of the Government of Canada to the principal concepts of public involvement.

The manual's purpose is to assist agencies in the Government of Canada in developing and implementing public involvement programs in the early stages of project planning, particularly within the Initial Environmental Evaluation phase of the Environmental Assessment and Review Process. The manual is oriented to small and medium sized projects which, for the most part, should not require sophisticated or extensive public involvement programs.

The emphasis towards increasing public involvement is reflected in the words of the Minister of the Environment in the introduction to a discussion paper on environmental assessment. He underlines the need to provide "for maximum public participation in government decision-making", and suggests that public comment should be invited during early planning stages.

WHAT IS PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT?

Public involvement is the process by which the views of all parties interested in agency decisions – interested and affected individuals, organizations, provincial, territorial and local governments, and other federal agencies– are integrated into an agency's decision making process.

One of the several important factors responsible for this PI program achieving its objectives was that the agency acknowledged the concerns raised by the residents and, with the cooperation of other federal agencies, made strenuous efforts to develop a workable compromise solution.

People will forgive a lot of mistakes if the genuine intent is there. If you're just going through the motions, people get the message......

The public involvement process provides a means by which public concerns, needs, and values are identified prior to decisions, so that the public can contribute to the decision making process.

Public involvement is two-way communication, with the overall goal being better overall decision making by the agency in question and the federal government in general.

The most important qualities in any public involvement program are that the agency and its representatives are sincere, and have integrity and commitment. Experience has shown that it is preferable to hire people with these qualities and train them than to hire those with experience but whose attitude and personality are inappropriate.

WHEN IS PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT NEEDED?

Most decision processes will benefit from some form of public involvement. The thrust of this manual is to encourage the increasing use of public involvement at early stages in the decision process, no matter how small the project.

WHO IS THE PUBLIC?

The public is a constantly shifting multiplicity of affiliations, interests, and alliances. **There are many publics, rather than "the public".** These publics change for each issue, and grow larger as a decision gets closer and its consequences are better understood. A public involvement program may use several different involvement techniques at the same time, each designed to reach a different segment of the public.

BENEFITS OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Experience has demonstrated that public involvement does make a difference in project planning. Because of the trend for increased participation in all aspects of society, the public generally will not accept being left out of a decision making process, or only superficially involved at the end of the process.

This manual presents a wide variety of information, tools and techniques which can be used to manage public involvement programs. If these strategies are implemented, a wide range of benefits can accrue to the project manager and the agency in question including the following:

Increase quality of decisions

The thought process in preparing for a public involvement program will assist in clarifying and organizing the objectives and requirements of a project, in turn improving the overall decision making. An even greater benefit is that the publics' response may require the rethinking of some assumptions about the decision to be made.

Provide for more efficient project management

Planning for public involvement can lead to more efficient overall project management. As a manager, how do you know that you have not spent 80 percent of your available resources on alternatives or solutions that are not implementable? Answering that question is crucial. Public involvement management is a tool to help manag-

Public involvement must be conceived as an integral part of the project ... from its conception to its implementation.

The Practitioners Speak.....

An engineer from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers related the following to me:

"I developed and used public involvement approaches for wetland management and general permitting for five reasons:

☐ Our workshop approach reduced the workload on a regulatory staff already stretched very thin. The disputants did most of the work!

☐ I wanted more management control. The agency was always reacting. Our public involvement approach put us in a pro-active stance. It helped us to be up front on the issues.

☐ Our public involvement approach promoted public understanding of the permit process.

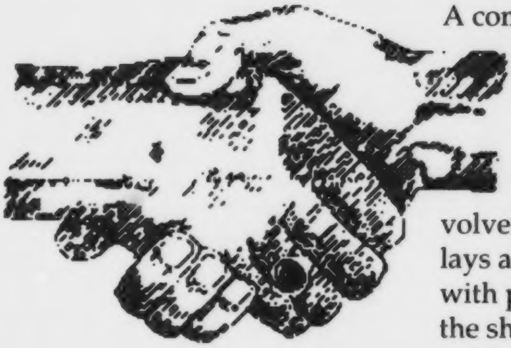
☐ Public involvement actually enhanced our ability to ensure environmental safeguards for cumulative effects. Experience showed that it was difficult for judges to rule on the issue of cumulative effects for single permits. It was easier on a general permit which could be obtained for the entire region, if the public supported it in the public involvement process.

☐ Public involvement helped the agency to better manage conflict in the whole geographic area. Instead of being drawn into either mediating conflicts which have 'ripened' or into being a disputant, we got likely disputants to talk before the conflict was ripe.

These factors sold not only myself, but the agency on the effectiveness of public involvement."

ers answer such questions. It accomplishes this by identifying the crucial issues and constraints on a project early in the process. It also can foster a shared understanding of the project's problems early enough so that positive actions can be taken by all parties involved.

Minimize project cost and time delay



A common perception is that a public involvement program adds to project costs and increases time lost to delays. In reality, early public involvement can reduce the delays and costs associated with public controversy. In the short term, public involvement does result in increased time and cost to arrive at a decision. However, a decision that is costly and time-consuming to make may be economical if it leads to action. A decision that is made quickly and cheaply may be costly if it does nothing to create agreement between parties on a conflicting course of action.

Public involvement can result in a higher level of commitment to the decision by interest groups with a stake in the decision. This will minimize controversy during implementation; thus the cost savings will more than offset the original cost of the public involvement program.

Increase ease of implementation

Public involvement can result in a higher level of commitment to the decision by interest groups with a stake in the decision.

Avoid "worst-case" confrontation

Early public involvement can help reduce the probability that the agency will be faced with "acute adversarial situations". Therefore, in the long run, public involvement can reduce the manpower and financial resources allocated to projects. However, public involvement is not magic, it will not reduce or eliminate all conflicts.

Maintain credibility and legitimacy

The way to achieve and maintain legitimacy, particularly when controversial decisions must be made, is to follow a decision-making process which is visible and credible with the public, and involves the public. PI programs will also leave the public more informed of the objectives and operation of the organization.

Increase management expertise

More and more, management is being required to meet and work with the public. Man-

Local publics can have very positive responses and creative solutions if they are consulted. Listening to the public pays off!!!

agement can increase their level of expertise in working with the public by undertaking programs that are non-controversial, where time is available to plan the program without the time considerations of a high profile, reactive situation. In this way, whether the programs are successful or not, a learning experience has occurred. This will help in future situations, especially if they happen to be very controversial.

Develop team building opportunities

As managers decide on the proper public involvement approach, team members will be debating not only project expenditures but also project objectives. Thinking about how to explain a study to people outside the agency often forces the agency to "get its act together" internally. That is, project objectives are clarified and trade-offs among these objectives are identified and negotiated.

The Practitioners Speak.....

I remember one project which involved siting a major 500 KV hydro-electric right-of-way through delicate delta and wetlands near a northern lake. The area was traditionally used by local native Indian people so they were involved in the impact studies as part of the team. The general public was also involved in many of the public meetings. The route location engineering team was unable to find an alignment that didn't pose environmental problems to the wetlands or the delta or did not result in massive costs for underwater alignments across the lake. In a major team meeting, which was attended by the native people, the lack of a suitable route location was discussed at length with no resolution. Then one of the native people put up a hand, and suggested that if several artificial islands were constructed, during winter when little environmental damage would occur, these islands could be combined with several existing islands and a relatively inexpensive route alignment could be constructed. As you can imagine, there were a few red-faced members of the route location team when this was stated in front of the department minister. And guess what, the solution was proven viable. **Local publics can have very positive responses and creative solutions if they are consulted. Listening to the public pays off.**

Figure 1
Degrees of Public Involvement

(First - Least public involvement Last - most public involvement)

Persuasion
The use of public involvement techniques in legitimate endeavours to change attitudes without raising public expectations of participating in the planning process.

Education
The use of information dissemination and general instruction to create an awareness of programs and issues.

Information Feedback
The distribution, by the authority, of information on a policy planning situation on which the authority has a stated position and the request for public feedback on the position.

Consultation
Use of formal dialogue between authorities and public based on initially established mutually accepted objectives.

Joint Planning
Shared decision making. The public is represented on departmental planning boards, is given voting and decision making authority. Issues should be geographically specific and understandable by local participants.

Delegated Authority
The transfer of responsibilities, normally associated with the authority, to the public or other levels of government possessing the necessary expertise.

Self Determination
The undertaking of the planning process by the public directly.

Public involvement and controversy: Public involvement is not a tool that, on its own, can end controversy. However, the controversy may be lessened compared with not using it. Public involvement can manage controversy. It is also a way to allow entry into the decision process for a "new" social partner, the public..

In short, substantive discussions among team members, including those from other departments and agencies, are encouraged early and throughout any project. The benefits from such dialogue reap dividends two and three years later when the project is in the developmental and operational stages.

Public involvement planning thus becomes an occasion for building a team.

Develop public expertise and creativity

Public involvement offers the potential to expand available expertise by fostering shared ownership in the project. Public involvement can encourage outside expertise to engage in research, present arguements and otherwise enrich debates. Frequently, those participating in public involvement activities are experts in their own right.

Their contributions can be significant. Many times agencies have discovered that the public's expertise and creativity was invaluable in contributing to the development of sensitive compromise solutions to problems. Managing public involvement can actually enhance both the study's quality and quantity of scientific expertise.

With early public involvement, agencies can respond to new ideas before getting locked into defending standard, possibly outdated, approaches.

Concensus Building

A public involvement program can build a solid, long term agreement and committment between otherwise divergent parties. A program that builds understanding between parties can only help with project implementation and eventual operational phases.

TYPES OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Degrees of public involvement can range from public information, where the goal is to inform the public about a decision, to inviting the public to be heard before a decision is made, to more encompassing approaches, where the public can influence a decision directly or be given the latitude to determine the decision in partnership with the agency.

Figure 1 presents a broad spectrum of public involvement approaches. The first two, Persuasion and Education, are not truly public involvement, although they are important in combination with other approaches. At the other end of the spectrum, Delegated Authority and Self Determination may only be usable if your agency has substantial flexibility in its mandate. This means that the most feasible range of approach-es will be those of Information Feedback, Consultation, and Joint Planning.

Selecting the approaches to employ will be part of the process outlined in the next section of this overview.

The essence of public involvement is two-way communication. It isn't genuine public involvement unless there's some information coming back from the public (although there may be times during a public involvement program when it is appropriate to be simply providing information).

PLANNING FOR PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Public involvement must be integrated into the total project planning process, rather than added on as an afterthought. To achieve successful public involvement, it is essential to develop a carefully thought out plan. Paradoxically, the presence of a plan enables those carrying out public involvement to be flexible, and adjust the activities of the program in response to the situation.

In government agencies, decisions are rarely a single choice made at a single point in time; rather they are usually a series of decisions resulting in a final outcome. There are key points when decision makers want engineering, economic, social, and environmental information.

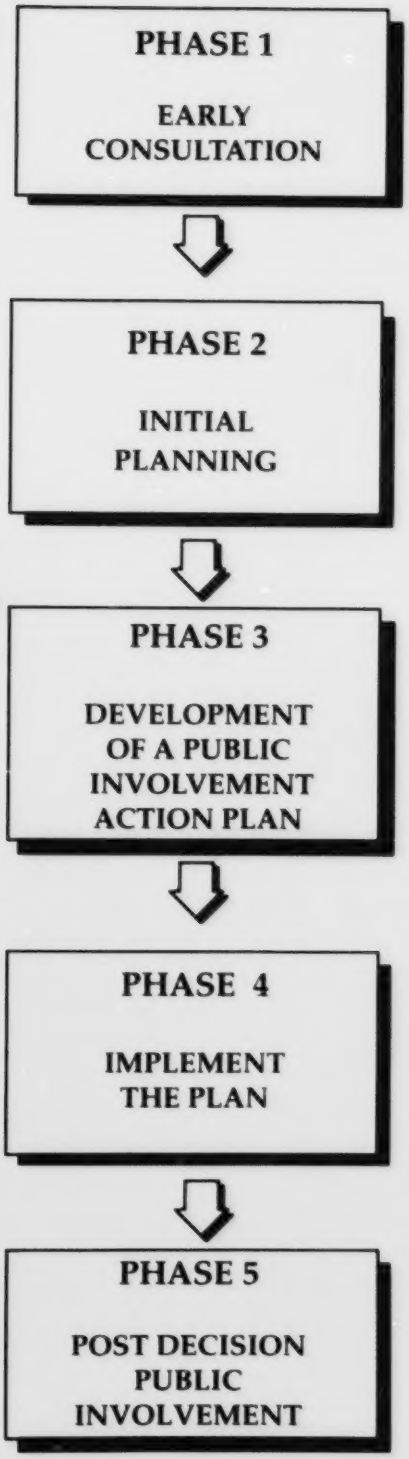
When public involvement is well integrated into the decision making process, a decision maker would be as unwilling to make a decision without adequate public involvement information as he or she would be unwilling to make a decision without adequate engineering, economic or environmental data.

Public involvement must thus be accepted as the agency's "way of doing business". For each project, the program for involving the public must be designed to meet the project scale and the decisions which must be made. The programs' approaches must be geared to the public's needs, with sufficient time allowed for the

PUBLIC
MEETINGS
AND
WORKSHOPS

FIGURE 2

Steps in a Public Involvement Program


PHASE 1
EARLY CONSULTATION
PHASE 2
INITIAL PLANNING
PHASE 3
DEVELOPMENT OF A PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT ACTION PLAN
PHASE 4
IMPLEMENT THE PLAN
PHASE 5
POST DECISION PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

public to become informed on an issue, and with technical reports translated into layman's language.

Figure 2 outlines the five main phases of public involvement planning.

In practice, no public involvement process is as linear as that portrayed here; rather the process is an iterative one in which parts of a process are redesigned as steps are monitored for results.

Volume 2 presents the planning process in detail.

Your agency must provide proof that you are ***flexible,*** *not only in conceiving and implementing but in meeting the post decision requirements of your public involvement activities. In public involvement, you must take nothing for granted. Each public process is new and unique.* ***Never act on a preconceived idea or process.***

You've got to get management to feel that the public involvement program is their program. They may have staff to help them run it, but they need to have an emotional stake in the program or it's not going to change anything.

SUPPORT FROM DECISION MAKERS AND SENIOR MANAGEMENT

To carry out public involvement effectively, project managers and public involvement staff must have the support of senior management, in terms of resources of time and budget, training programs, decision making support, and contact. Even though senior managers are usually not involved in the day to day activities of a public involvement program, they influence it through their style of decision making, the organizational structure of the agency, and the nature of the support they can provide. There must be commitment from senior management if public involvement programs are to be effective.

It is important that management not underestimate the additional time and costs of public involvement, so that realistic budgets and schedules are established.

Senior management can also demonstrate its support for public involvement by being present at important public meetings.

Finally, top management must provide a model of open communication to all groups. It is wise to stay in frequent, informal communication with these people and groups as the issues develop, because this kind of regular communication is the best possible "early warning system". In particular, it is essential to work with both political and media interests, keeping them informed of a project's progress.

The importance of support from decision makers and senior management is discussed in detail in Volume 1.

STAFFING AND ORGANIZING FOR PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The success of a public involvement program is dependent on a number of organizational factors which must be considered when developing, planning and implementing a program.

Such factors include:

☐ organizational decision making style;

☐ appropriate staff performance measurements;

☐ providing a model of open communication within the agency; and

☐ inter and intra-agency coordination.

These factors are discussed in Volume 1.

HINTS TO DECISION MAKERS REVIEWING PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROGRAMS

Some factors to be considered in management's review of public involvement programs include:

☐ **Look for links between public comment and the decisions made.**

☐ **Examine the range of publics that have been included.**

☐ **Check to make sure that mechanisms are in place to keep the public informed during quiet, or low profile, periods of a project.**

☐ **Insist that documents be in the public's language.**

☐ **Role play the various interests as part of management review.**

These are critical factors to take into consideration in reviewing any public involvement program. Detailed discussion of these factors are provided in Volume 1 of this manual.

Take care of your public involvement managers. Managing public involvement has never been easy. They need to know that their work is appreciated by senior management. A good public involvement manager is rare .

TRENDS IN PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Volume 1 of the manual presents a section designed to increase the awareness of senior managers to some of the trends currently affecting the field of public involvement. While there are many trends which could be included, two relate closely to the issues which have been raised in this overview.

The first trend discusses techniques for senior decision makers to monitor current issues of public concern and priority. Through the techniques presented in Volumes 1 and 2, the decision maker can be better prepared and more knowledgeable of the public and governmental issues, thereby responding in a more pro-active manner.

The second trend relates to building concensus with the publics with which you will have to work. While this has been an ongoing strategy in the United States over the past fewyears, it has been slow to catch on in Canada. This is due primarily to the different political and judicial systems in the two countries. As stated by numerous American counterparts, "Whatever you do, stay away from the court system. Every project we now propose ends up going through the legal system. This is causing tremendous and costly delays on all projects". The response in the United States has been toward more public involvement programs, many of which now involve a variety of mediation and concensus building techniques.

Detailed descriptions of these two major trends can be found in Volume 1 of the manual.

Other external issues are out there that will influence your activities and problems: you must be aware and ready to respond to these other issues.

USING THE MANUAL ON PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The three volumes contained in this manual have been prepared for use by departmental agencies of the Government of Canada. The manual is designed to guide senior managers in the development of public involvement programs that may be needed by their department or agency as part of the environmental review process or for their own, smaller, internal projects which may never require a review process by other agencies.

ORGANIZATION OF THE MANUAL

The manual is organized as a set of four volumes:

Executive Overview:

This volume, targeted for the senior executive, provides a rationale for pubic involvement and a brief overview of the public involvement planning process.

Volume One: Management Implications for Decision Makers

This volume is directed to senior managers to assist them in determining when public involvement may be required in their organization and how it should be established within the agency.

Volume Two: Developing a Public Involvement Program

This volume is directed to those line managers and practitioners who will be responsible for designing and implementing a public involvement program.

Volume Three: Public Involvement Techniques: A Dictionary of Ideas and Methods

This technical volume acts as a dictionary of possible methods and strategies which can be used by the practitioner . Methods are identified along with the processes which can be used to implement them. Their advantages and disadvantages are presented.

Prepared by:
Praxis, Calgary, Alberta, Canada
Printed in Canada 1988

Volume

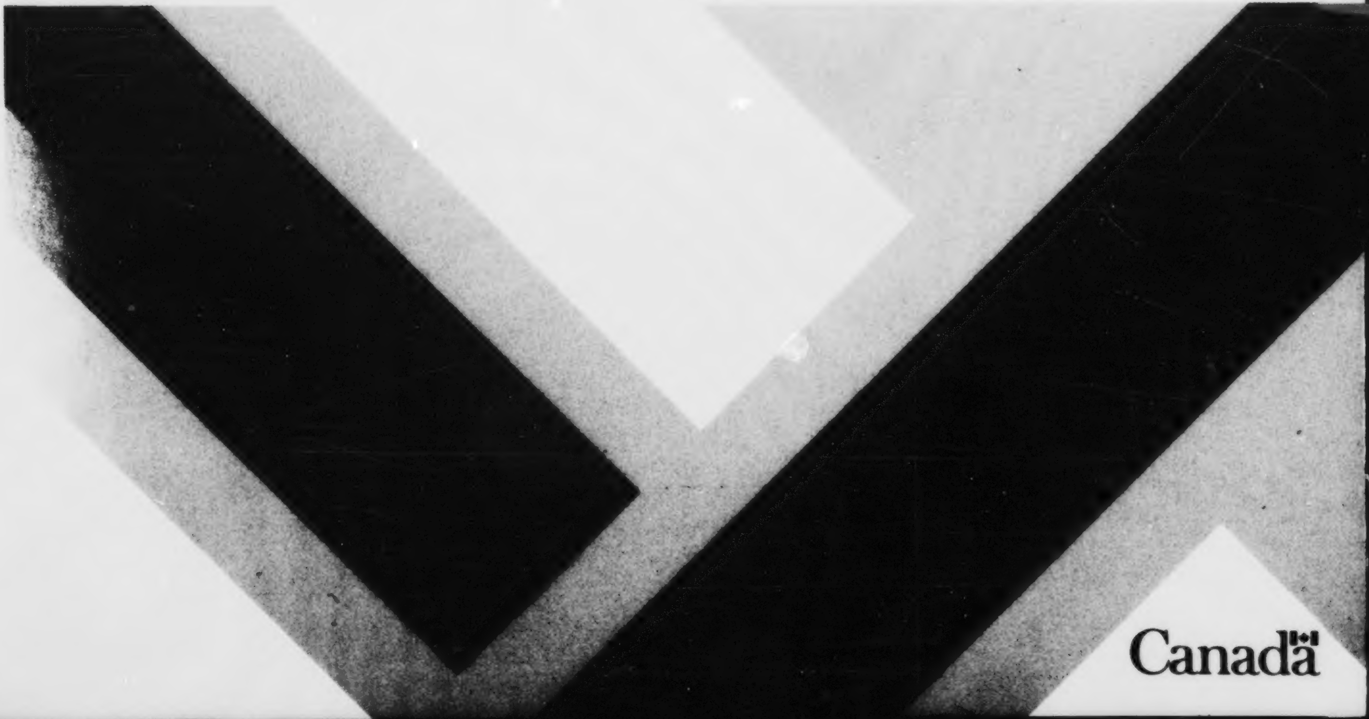
1

Federal Environmental Assessment
Review Office

Bureau fédéral d'examen
des évaluations environnementales

MANUAL ON PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT:

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROGRAMS



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FOREWORD

This manual on public involvement in environmental impact assessment is long overdue. Ever since it was established in 1973, the federal Environmental Assessment and Review Process (EARP) has been firmly committed to the principle and practice of public involvement in decision-making.

Over the past 15 years, a considerable body of knowledge and experience in public involvement has developed within the environmental impact assessment community as well as within other planning systems. The Federal Environmental Assessment Review Office believes it is time to consolidate this knowledge and experience and to make it available to government agencies in a handbook format. This manual on public involvement is the result.

It is designed to be a reference manual for those with responsibility for planning and implementing public involvement programs as part of the EARP requirements. It is focussed on the early screening and scoping stages of the process and oriented primarily to small and medium sized projects that may not undergo formal public reviews. However, the principles and procedures have application to later stages as well. The operative words in the manual are planning *and* implementation. That is, it is intended as a practical user's guide.

The authors of the manual were well aware that public involvement programs of an organization cannot be successful without the understanding and support of its senior management. With that in mind, they have included an Executive Overview to summarize the main ideas for senior managers.

The Federal Environmental Assessment Review Office believes that effective implementation of the methods and techniques for public involvement outlined in the manual will assist government departments in making sound decisions. We anticipate revising the manual from time to time in light of experience and will welcome comments from users.

Raymond M. Robinson
Executive Chairman

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PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROGRAMS

VOLUME 1

MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS FOR DECISION MAKERS

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Special thanks go to the Steering Committee Chairperson, Dr. Gordon Beanlands, from FEARO.

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- Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
- Canada Oil and Gas Lands Administration
- Energy, Mines and Resources
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PURPOSE OF THE MANUAL

The four volumes contained in this manual have been prepared for use by departmental agencies of the Government of Canada to assist senior managers in developing and implementing public involvement programs in the early stages of project planning, and in the Initial Environmental Evaluation (IEE) as defined within the Environmental Assessment and Review Process (EARP).

The manual is oriented to small and medium sized projects which, for the most part, should not require sophisticated public involvement programs or a significant allocation of resources.

Thus, the manual can be used to guide senior managers in the development of public involvement programs that may be needed by their department or agency as part of the environmental review process or for their own, smaller, internal projects which may never require a review process by other agencies.

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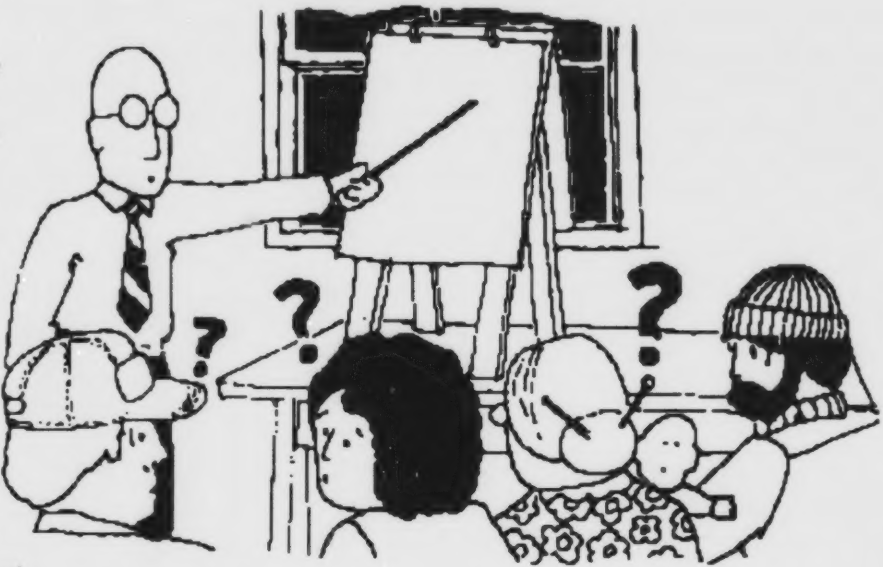
Volume Three: Public Involvement Techniques: A Dictionary of Ideas and Methods

This technical volume acts as a dictionary of possible methods and strategies which can be used by the practitioner. Methods are identified along with the processes which can be used to implement them. Their advantages and disadvantages are presented.

One thing I've learned is that public involvement is not a one time thing. You don't make it with the public by how you conduct one public involvement program. They want to see your track record. Show me that you'll not only listen to me this time, but the next time and the next.

The first time out is the hardest. You're doing your damndest to do a good job and the public's still as suspicious as ever. It almost makes you want to give up. But think about it from their point of view. After years of not being consulted you're coming out and saying "I'm a good guy, trust me." They've got to see that the change is for real, not a new game. The real payoff from public involvement isn't on any one program, but the cumulative effect of regular consultation on all important issues.



CONTEXT OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

WHAT IS PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

There is no single, adequate definition of public involvement. The concept of public involvement is different for everybody involved. The best introduction is that public involvement is the process by which the views of all parties interested in an agency's decisions – interested and affected individuals, organizations, provincial, territorial and local governments, and other federal agencies – are integrated into an agency's decision making process.

The public involvement process provides a means by which public concerns, needs, and values are identified prior to decisions, so that the public can contribute to the decision making process. **Public involvement is two-way communication, with the overall goal being better decision making by the agency.**

People cannot provide informed input or opinion unless they have been adequately informed of the alternatives and their consequences, therefore, public information is always a central element in any public involvement program. However, public involvement is much more than public information. Public information is typically limited to informing the public, or one-way communication. **The purpose of public involvement is both to inform the public and to solicit response regarding the public's needs, values, and proposed solutions or actions.**

The ultimate measure of the effectiveness of public involvement will be improved quality of the agency's decisions and being responsive to public input and requirements.

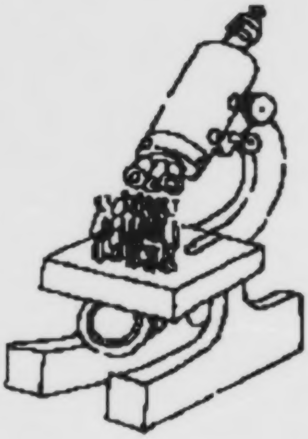
The most important qualities in any public involvement program are that the agency and its representatives are sincere, ethical and have integrity and commitment.

The essence of public involvement is two-way communication. It isn't genuine public involvement unless there's some information coming back from the public (although there may be times during a public involvement program when it is appropriate to be simply providing information).

GOALS OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

An effective public involvement program is designed to meet the following goals:

- ☐ To identify public concerns and values;
- ☐ To gather economic, environmental, and social information from the public;



There are many publics, rather than "the public".

- ☐ To inform the public about potential actions or alternatives, and the potential consequences of these actions;
- ☐ To develop two way contact;
- ☐ To develop and maintain credibility; and
- ☐ Ultimately, to improve the overall decision making of the agency.

WHEN IS PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT NEEDED

The need for public involvement is related to the "significance" of the decision, or the extent to which the decision is "controversial".

One of the main emphases of public involvement is that the agencies and the publics come to perceive each other more as collaborators than as adversaries.

With early public involvement, though, the problem is to forecast which issues will be considered significant or controversial. An issue which appears as relatively insignificant to the agency may be seen as very significant by outside individuals or interests. By the time an issue becomes controversial, opportunities to prevent polarization or development of alternatives may be lost.

Public involvement will be needed when:

- ☐ The decision requires making choices between important social values;
- ☐ The results of a decision will significantly affect the interests – whether economic, political or social – of some people or groups more than others;
- ☐ The public perceives that it has a lot to win or lose by a decision;
- ☐ The decision involves a subject which is already a source of controversy; or
- ☐ The agency needs positive public support or action to implement a decision.

Most decision processes will benefit from some public involvement. The thrust of this manual is to encourage the increasing use of public involvement at early stages in the decision process, no matter how small the project.

WHO IS THE PUBLIC

A public is any person, persons or group of people that have a distinctive interest or stake in an issue.

The public is not a single entity, a monolithic whole. Rather it is a constantly shifting multiplicity of affiliations, interests, and alliances. There are many publics, rather than "the public".

The Practitioners Speak.....

Once an issue starts to grow it's a lot like a grass fire. If it can be contained in the first 48 hours or so, it won't turn into much. But if it goes past that, you may never get it out. Suppose you've proposed to build a transmission line or a new highway, and I'm afraid I might be affected. The first thing I do is phone a few neighbors. Now they're frightened too. Because we don't know much about it, imagination begins to run wild. An unknown threat is always scarier than a known threat. Next we start asking questions of people we respect as community leaders – local elected officials, or the head of an interest group. If they get all excited too, then the fire starts to rage out of control. But, if when we talk to these people, they already know about the project and can reassure us, then the fire is contained. We may still oppose the project, but the fear which really stokes the fire has been taken away.

You've got to be out "on the ground" early to contact the elected officials or community leaders. If you wait for six months, and then inform them only because you've got a public hearing coming up, you don't have any firebreak, and you may get burned.

People participate when they are strongly affected. They do not participate when they believe they are not affected or cannot affect the issue to any extent. People may see themselves as affected for a variety of reasons, including:

- ☐ proximity
- ☐ economics
- ☐ social/environmental concerns
- ☐ values

Public involvement seldom reaches "the general public". It always focuses on a narrower range of the public who view themselves as affected by the decision. Also, "the public" changes for each issue, and grows larger as a decision gets closer and its consequences are better understood.

Use the public as a resource - don't view it as a stumbling block.

In designing public involvement programs, it is far more useful to think of different levels and segments of "the public". These might include:

- ☐ Decision makers or technical staff in other fed-

The success of PI programs inevitably depends to a significant extent on the personal rapport and trust of the various parties. If trust respect and sympathy are not present, then public involvement will not succeed.

eral, territorial, provincial, or local government agencies;

☐ The constituencies of other federal, provincial, or local governmental agencies;

☐ Leaders and/or the constituencies of organized interest groups;

☐ Directly affected individuals;

☐ Individuals concerned with similar issues;

☐ Individuals or groups who may see themselves as affected when they receive more information about the issue; and

☐ People who have been informed about the issue, but choose not to participate at this time.

Remember, however, that interest groups will differ on each and every project. Do not assume that they will remain constant.

Not all of these publics will choose to participate, nor will they be interested in all aspects of the decision making process. As a result, "the public" in a particular public involvement program may change from stage to stage. This may result in a public involvement program using several different involvement techniques at the same time, each designed to reach a different segment of the public.

PLANNING FOR PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Types of public involvement range from persuasion, in which the agency makes all the decisions, to self determination, where the authority is entirely outside the control of the agency. Most traditional public involvement programs have only utilized the basic types, however, more recently, there has been a move towards concepts such as joint planning and delegated authority.

Degrees of public involvement can range from public information, where the goal is to inform the public about a decision, to inviting the public to be heard before a decision is made, to more encompassing approaches, where the public can influence a decision directly or be given the latitude to determine the decision in partnership with the agency.

One of the greatest challenges for the public involvement practitioner is to balance public input. Judgement is required to balance this input from the general public with that from the special interest groups. It is often easy to respond only to the "squeaky wheel".. make sure you know what the general population is thinking as well.

Figure 1
Types of Public Involvement

(First - least public involvement   Last - most public involvement)

Persuasion
The use of public involvement techniques in legitimate endeavours to change attitudes without raising public expectations of participating in the planning process.

Education
The use of information dissemination and general instruction to create an awareness of programs and issues.

Information Feedback
The distribution, by the authority, of information on a policy planning situation on which the authority has a stated position and the request for public feedback on the position.

Consultation
Use of formal dialogue between authorities and public based on initially established mutually accepted objectives.

Joint Planning
Shared decision making. The public is represented on departmental planning boards, is given voting, and decision making authority. Issues should be geographically specific and understandable by local participants.

Delegated Authority
The transfer of responsibilities, normally associated with the authority, to the public or other levels of government possessing the necessary expertise.

Self Determination
The undertaking of the planning process by the public directly.

Figure 1 presents a broad spectrum of public involvement approaches. The first two, Persuasion and Education, are not truly public involvement, although they are important in combination with other approaches. At the other end of the spectrum, Delegated Authority and Self Determination may only be appropriate if your agency has substantial flexibility in its mandate. This means that the most feasible range of approaches will be those of Information Feedback, Consultation, and Joint Planning.

Selecting the approaches to employ will be part of the process outlined in Figure 2.

It is critical to note that the use of only one selected technique is not adequate to meet all the requirements and demands from divergent publics at different stages of the process. A sociological term called "triangulation" is im-

Perception is reality.

The Practitioners Speak.....

One of the lessons I've learned is to accept what people feel. You don't have to agree or disagree with it, just accept that's how they feel. I remember doing a training program on how to run public meetings. One of the participants was a real cynic, and didn't buy this thing about accepting people's feelings. We were suggesting that all that should be done was to verbally summarize what each speaker said, and keep a running summary on a flip chart where everybody could see what was being recorded. He thought it was his job to straighten people out.

A couple of weeks later, he was conducting a public meeting and at some point in the meeting someone began playing a guitar and leading the audience in singing a song against the agency. The person leading the meeting was smart enough to realize that if he tried to be the hard guy and stop it, he would probably have a riot on his hands. So, he decided, "What the heck, maybe I'll try that stuff they taught in the course." He just relaxed and waited until the song was over, and then he summarized the sentiments of the song, checked with the guitar player to be sure the summary seemed fair, and had one of his staff write the summary on a flip chart. Guess what happened? The entire audience gave him a round of applause.

Figure 1
Phases in the Public Involvement Planning Process

Phase 1. Early Consultation

Early "reconnaissance" is required to determine the major public issues which could be raised by a project proposal, the likely level of public interest, the most likely participants and the key individuals who will represent them.

Phase 2. Initial Planning

Five detailed preparatory steps lead to the development of a public involvement action plan. The steps include: identifying the agency's decision making process, identifying publics, identifying special characteristics of the situation, writing specific objectives, and determining information exchange requirements.

Phase 3. Development of Action Plan

Action planning begins with choice of public involvement methods keyed to the previous two phases. The Action Plan includes establishment of intra-agency communications, commitment of resources and the scheduling of activities essential to conducting the public involvement methods selected.

Phase 4. Implement the Plan

Evaluation of the public involvement process proceeds in conjunction with monitoring of the progress of the original agency's project. Evaluation of the results of public involvement is carried out according to guidelines which emphasize both participant satisfaction with the process and ultimate effect on the project.

Phase 5. Post Decision Public Involvement

Continued involvement is important for many of the reasons that early involvement is useful. After the decision, the public can be involved in further planning, implementation, mitigation, compensation and evaluation of the project. This is especially true with those aspects of the project which directly affect the public. Also, if the project does not go ahead, it is very important to tell the public that this is the situation and the circumstances that led to the decision.

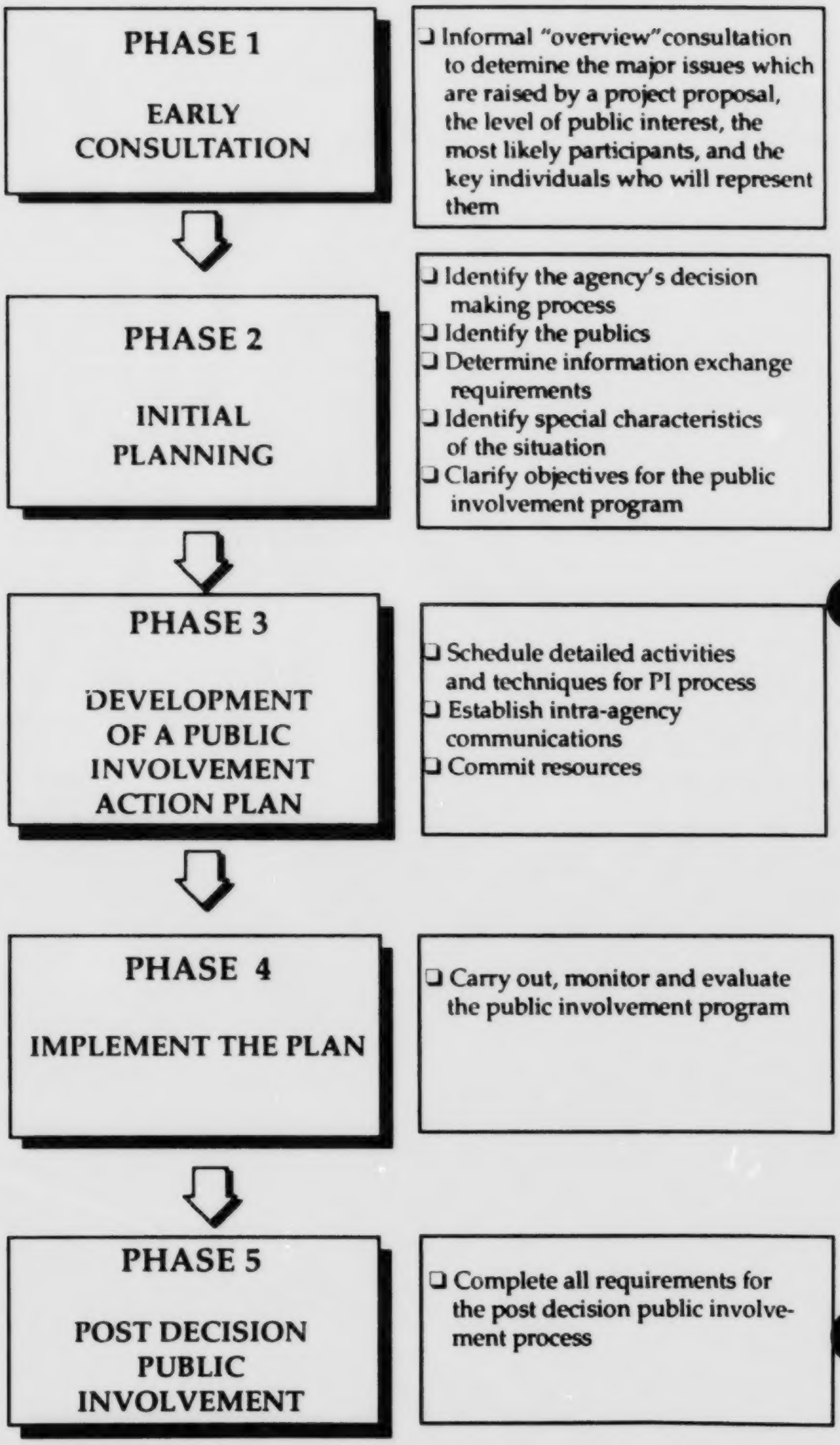
portant to present here. Triangulation involves the use of several different techniques on the same project. If similar patterns or trends result from all the techniques, then the results are accurate, and you are on the right path. If they are divergent, then one or more of the approaches may be giving you innaccurate information. You will have to determine which is correct.

Be pro-active towards the public at the outset and take the initiative; then cultivate their shared responsibility.

Be willing to be open from the beginning.

Figure 2

Steps in Developing and Implementing a Public Involvement Program



PHASE 1

EARLY CONSULTATION

- ❑ Informal "overview"consultation to detemine the major issues which are raised by a project proposal, the level of public interest, the most likely participants, and the key individuals who will represent them

PHASE 2

INITIAL PLANNING

- ❑ Identify the agency's decision making process
- ❑ Identify the publics
- ❑ Determine information exchange requirements
- ❑ Identify special characteristics of the situation
- ❑ Clarify objectives for the public involvement program

PHASE 3

DEVELOPMENT OF A PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT ACTION PLAN

- ❑ Schedule detailed activities and techniques for PI process
- ❑ Establish intra-agency communications
- ❑ Commit resources

PHASE 4

IMPLEMENT THE PLAN

- ❑ Carry out, monitor and evaluate the public involvement program

PHASE 5

POST DECISION PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

- ❑ Complete all requirements for the post decision public involvement process

The Practitioners Speak .....

The establishment of a tripartite committee of community, company and government representatives in Fort McKay has meant a profound change in the way problems are dealt with. Previously, confrontation was the norm; now, government departments and agencies have been able to adopt a more sympathetic and creative approach to problem solving in the cooperative committee environment.

The tripartite interface committee was able to successfully deal with a new, billion dollar company proposal without the need for a public hearing. The company estimates that this saved it $200,000. The community benefitted because the review process identified several potential community programs and facilities. Funding was subsequently obtained for these facilities. The government benefitted by being able to participate in a program that permitted creative and constructive developments.

Multiple techniques also protect you in the advent that one of the techniques you have chosen is not appropriate for the particular public or the situation at hand. What do you do if no one comes to your public meeting and you have based your entire planning process on the data from the meeting? If you have used several techniques, you have a "fall-back position" in that you can utilize the other techniques.

Figure 2 outlines the steps required within each of the five phases of public involvement planning. This diagram is also used as the organizational framework for the planning process presented in Volume Two.

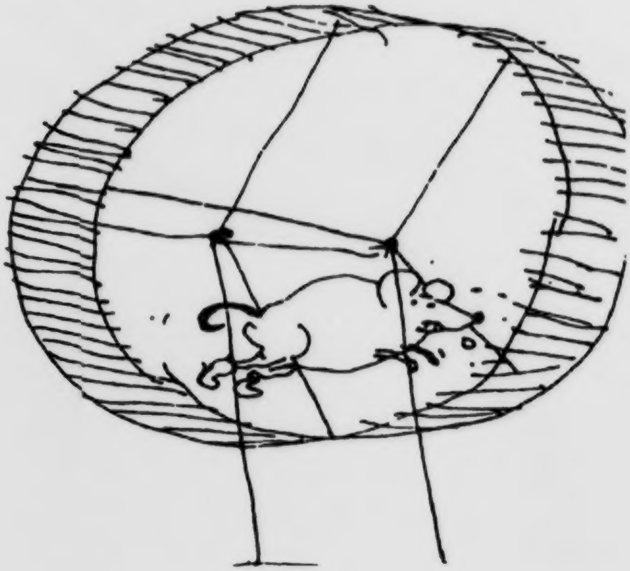
It should be emphasized that, in practice, no public involvement process is as linear as described in this manual. The process is more an iterative one. For example, parts of a process are often redesigned as a result of the monitoring and evaluation phase.

REASONS FOR PREPARING A PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN

There are several important reasons for preparing a plan:

Systematic Analysis:
The planning process requires careful analysis of how public involvement fits into the decision making process, which publics are likely to be concerned, and how their comments can be most effectively solicited. Since this analysis is crucial to effective public involvement, preparation of a plan is simply preparation for doing a good job, and a way of ensuring that you have designed a program adequate for the particular issue. It is possible to do a good job of systematic planning without writing a formal plan, just as it is possible to write a plan without doing good analysis, but preparing a plan provides a structure encouraging better analysis.

Integration in Decision Making:
As discussed in previous chapters, one of the most important characteristics of effective public involvement is that it is an integrated part of the decision making process. The planning process used in preparing your plan is designed to ensure that this integration occurs.



Nothing is more terrible than activity without insight.
Thomas Carlyle

You must remember not to limit yourself to only one method or technique when designing a public involvement program. Putting "all your eggs in one basket "can result in the downfall of the process you are trying to achieve. Divide your resources over several techniques. What do you have if no-one shows up to your public meeting and you have no flexibility to develop something else?

Internal Coordination: Implementation of effective public involvement requires a variety of staff from different departments within an agency. In addition to the program departments directly involved with the issue, public involvement may also involve:

☐ publications staff to prepare brochures, reports, newsletters;

☐ media relations staff to prepare news releases, obtain publicity, purchase advertisements;

☐ legal/regulatory compliance staff to ensure that your decision making process and public involvement program comply with all legal and regulatory requirements;

☐ local or regional office staff who will be responsible for local logistics and may play a very important role in your program; and

☐ technical staff from other departments who may need to make presentations or answer questions during public meetings.

The value of a public involvement plan is that it clarifies who needs to do what, by when. If other parts of the organization have a "piece of

The Practitioners Speak.....

In the early days the timing of our public involvement activities was often based on the "nightmare indicator". We'd wake up in the middle of the night in a cold sweat realizing that we hadn't talked to the public in months. So we'd go out and hold some kind of public meeting– it never occurred to us there was anything else to do – and we'd learn a lot of stuff that, if we'd known it three months sooner, might have had a lot of impact on what we were doing. But, since we didn't want to throw out three months of work, we'd charge ahead. Then the public got frustrated because nothing they said had an impact.

Finally, we realized that we had to sit down and plan ahead for when and why in the process we'd talk to the public. **One of the big payoffs was how much time it saved.** Staff members who'd been complaining about the time public involvement took suddenly discovered that it was taking time because it was tacked on to the process, not an integral part of it. **Once it was integrated into the project planning process, the time required decreased dramatically.**

A basic rule of thumb is to give people information about the project and the process, the major decision points and key information requirements at the earliest time. ***Then keep them updated.*** *If you don't have the answers in the early stages, let the public know this and let them know when they can expect answers or further information.*

Be honest about what you can and can't do – don't foster unrealistic expectations.

the action", their involvement in preparing or reviewing the public involvement plan is one way of getting their commitment to the program.

More than this, the preparation of a plan provides an opportunity for different sections of the agency to discuss the expectations as to what kind of public involvement is needed. Sometimes disagreements between different groups in the organization do not surface until a public involvement program is well underway. The result can be that support services needed from other parts of the organization are not provided when needed, or that the agency may appear divided or inconsistent in its contact with the public. The plan provides a forum for discussing and negotiating these differences in advance, before it affects your ability to implement an effective program.

Management Review:
The plan provides a document for management review of proposed public involvement programs. The plan gives management the information it needs to understand the potential political significance of an issue, and establish any problem indicators from the beginning. It ensures that the chances of management being taken by surprise are greatly reduced, and it also gives staff a mechanism for alerting management to political implications of which management might otherwise be unaware.

Public Review:
One way of gaining credibility for a potentially controversial decision making process is to provide opportunities for interested groups or individuals to review the public involvement plan. Their commitment to the process may increase their willingness to live with the outcome of the process. Giving groups an opportunity to review the plan also establishes your willingness to work with them, and reassures them of their opportunities to participate. If they do not believe your proposed program is adequate, it also gives you time to adjust accordingly. Typically, only organized groups with a direct interest in an issue will be interested in reviewing the plan.

Documentation:
If there are challenges to the adequacy of the program, the existence of a documented plan helps the agency to show the rationale for the level of public involvement activity chosen.

SUPPORT FROM DECISION MAKERS AND SENIOR MANAGEMENT

The decision-makers and senior management have a considerable impact on how public involvement is carried out within an agency, even though they are usually not directly involved in the day-to-day activities of a public involvement program. Management influences the success of a public involvement program in more subtle ways including the style of decision making, the organizational structure of the agency, and through the resources and training made available to the public involvement process.

SENIOR MANAGEMENT REVIEW AND SUPPORT

It is important that senior management review, support and be comfortable with, any decision making process which involves the public.

There are key points in any process where these decision makers should be involved. These points should be agreed upon upfront, with the decision makers, so that they are available when needed and not involved when they should not be there. Also, it must be remembered that different decisions are made at different levels and by different decision makers within the organization. All these conditions must be made explicit at the beginning of the process.

In working with the public, it is best to present any constraints up front, rather than risk altering the process to accommodate changing constraints or limitations. The public may feel misled and become resentful if unexpected changes occur part way through the process. They may become more skeptical than if there had been no public involvement opportunities provided.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IS INTEGRAL TO PROJECT PLANNING

Public involvement must be an integral part of the project planning process. Public involvement cannot be an add-on, put in place when the public becomes concerned about the decisions being made. Public involvement must be planned for from the very beginning of the process just like any other technical consideration. It must have the total support of the project team from the beginning if it is to be successful.

INITIATING PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT WITHIN THE AGENCY

There is no "no-risk" time to begin implementing public involvement. An agency just beginning the implementation of public involvement programs often faces the problem that offering public involvement opportunities on some issues can create an expectation that opportunities should be offered on all decisions, including decisions that are nearing implementation. Managers are often afraid that a consequence of providing public involvement opportunities for one decision will raise questions about why public involvement was not offered on other decisions made earlier. Public pressure may even build to re-open such decisions for full public involvement. Yet, obviously, it is not possible to back up and re-examine every decision that the agency has made. Experience has shown that this can be a legitimate concern, but that rarely has the problem been as large as anticipated.

Much of the original resistance to consulting with the public is a fear of the unknown, a fear of what could happen.

RECOGNIZING TIME AND BUDGET REQUIREMENTS

It is important that management not underestimate the additional time and costs of public involvement, so that realistic budgets and schedules are established.

It could take several years of significant public involvement, education and effort before everyone in an agency accepts that management is "serious" about public involvement. Management imposition of unrealistic time limits or budgetary constraints on public involvement programs during this period will be interpreted as lack of support, rather than as management efforts to control costs.

Time is also required because communicating with the public almost invariably requires a combination of disciplines or a team approach. Yet, people do not become a team simply by being designated as such. Effective teams are built. Most have worked together previously and have developed trust and confidence in each other.

Similarly, it usually takes several years of effective public involvement before the public begins to really trust the public involvement process. The same is true of staff. For example, it may take several years for people throughout an agency to believe that the agency is committed to public involvement. As a result, implementation of public involvement is often uneven, depending on which organizational unit is involved. This can also send mixed signals to the public, if one component of the agency is implementing an effective public involvement program while at the same time a different group in the same agency is running a proforma public involvement program.

DIRECT INVOLVEMENT OF SENIOR MANAGEMENT

Senior management can demonstrate its support for public involvement by being present at important public meetings. This does not mean that they should always run the meeting or control the meeting. It may be far more useful, in fact, for someone from senior management to open the meeting, announce that he or she intends to listen very carefully to the public comment, then turn the meeting over to someone else who is skilled in meeting leadership. When management is "up front" at a meeting it can encourage grandstanding from the audience, and commitments may be made under the pressure of the circumstance which may be regretted later. When meeting leadership is given to someone else, it establishes that the person leading the meeting is doing so not out of status or rank, but simply to provide the necessary structure, order and facilitation so that the meeting can be effective.

KNOWING WHEN A PROJECT IS IN TROUBLE

Everybody who has had much experience in public involvement has had the experience of badly underestimating the level of public controversy on some issues, and overestimating interest on others. This is, of course, one of the major reasons for early public involvement. Early involvement provides the opportunity to assess the level of public concern before the pressure has begun to build. In addition, early public involvement also allows the manager to establish relationships with the key interested parties. It is wise to stay in frequent, informal communication with these people and groups as the issue develops, because this kind of regular communication is the best possible "early warning system".

But how can the manager tell when an issue is heating up? Experts on conflict resolution say that there is a predictable "path of escalation" which occurs in conflicts if nothing intervenes to halt the escalation. The following are a list of indicators that an issue may be escalating:

Timing is everything – You can develop the most elaborate program which may take months or years to implement. You may get the best possible involvement and the best data, but if the decision was made months before, of what value was the public involvement program?

☐ Issues begin to proliferate, with new groups adding new issues;

☐ Issues move from the specific case to generalizations, e.g. from opposition to a specific project to "anti-development" generally;

☐ Criticisms of the proposed action turn into attacks against the agency or individuals;

☐ People who are considered "moderate" begin to get concerned about the issue;

☐ Political leaders (at whatever level of government) begin to use the issue for their own political gain;

☐ More radical leaders take over established groups; and

☐ Normal channels of communication shut down, and people begin to talk only to those people who agree with them.

If more than one of these events occurs, the heat is on, and only a significant commitment to public involvement is likely to keep this issue from escalating until it is completely outside management's control. As emphasized at the outset, early public involvement is the best way of preventing this kind of escalation.

The Practitioners Speak.....

The bottom line in public involvement isn't sophisticated techniques, although they sometimes help; the real issue is whether or not the public gets the message that you really care about what they have to say, and that you are willing to try to respond. I remember training two people to go out and set up public involvement programs. One of them was Joe Slick. He was fast on his feet. He had an answer for anything. He could have talked Adam out of his fig leaf. The other one was Janey Sincere. She was very quiet and unsure of herself in front of audiences and didn't have a great presentation. But, she really cared. Guess who got eaten alive? Joe Slick was back in the ward for repairs in just a couple of weeks. No matter how much Janey Sincere botched things up, what really came across was that she wanted to hear what people had to say, and it would make a difference. **People will forgive a lot of mistakes if the genuine intent is there. If you're just going through the motions, people get the message.**

STAFFING AND ORGANIZATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

The success of a public involvement program is dependent on a number of organizational factors which must be considered when developing, planning and implementing a program.

ORGANIZATIONAL DECISION MAKING STYLE

The job of the person who is running the public involvement program is made easier if the management style of the agency is consistent with the democratic principles and methods which the corporate staff are being asked to espouse. If the classic organizational values of efficiency, economy and control prevail, they will conflict with principles such as involvement in decision making, and access to information. Public involvement efforts are often doomed if decisions within the agency are being made in such a way that information from the public is either ignored by the decision maker(s) or so filtered down that it has little impact. A public involvement program is unlikely to be "able to deliver" if decisions within the agency are not also made in a consultative manner.

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENTS

The qualities that make an individual successful in the noisy, emotionally laden world of public involvement are often not adequately measured by organizations, so that the person responsible for public involvement may have few rewards for doing a good job. If organizations want to reward people who deal effectively with the public the criteria will have to shift from rewarding people who "keep the lid on" to rewarding those who succeed in getting resolution, even if the process was noisy. And since public involvement will not lead to successful resolution each time, there must be rewards for risktakers, even though the individuals may not always successful. This will require a change from the more common performance criteria such as how smoothly a project is operating or whether it is completed within budget and on schedule.

IN
RECOGNITION

The selection of the person who will work with the public or coordinate public involvement programs is critical to the agency's success. The agency must locate people with the right attitude to work with people and then train them in the additional skills which they may need. You cannot train a person to change their attitude.

PROVIDING A MODEL OF OPEN COMMUNICATION

It is essential that top management provide a model of open communication to all interest groups. This "early warning system" is one of the means of preventing issues from escalating. Management should not communicate only with groups considered part of its political constituency while avoiding others. This can create the impression that the agency is biased, and its communications are just propaganda selling the agency's point of view, rather than objective appraisal.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT WITHIN THE ORGANIZATION

Ideally the person working with the public should also be one of the persons responsible for making the decision. The decision maker who is too far removed from public contact does not experience the emotional reality of public opinion. Part of the public's message is the intensity with which it feels certain things, and if the decision makers are insulated from this intensity they may misjudge the significance of the public's concerns.

The Practitioners Speak.....

I remember one large government program where communities were funded to come up with a community plan. Local committees were set up, large staffs were hired, contracts were given to research consulting firms, and as something of an afterthought, they even had a public involvement officer. The only problem was that the public involvement officer was always a junior staff member, sort of a pimple on the body politic. This staff person would run around getting all kinds of comments from the public, but could never get anybody to pay attention to it. Management had done its job by hiring him, they didn't have to listen to him as well. As I remember it, after this experience a number of public involvement officers decided that planning wasn't the field for them, and decided to open up commercial franchises instead.

You've got to get management to feel that the public involvement program is their program. They may have staff to help them run it, but they need to have an emotional stake in the program or it's not going to change anything.

If managers are going to effectively implement public involvement programs they must receive adequate training and technical assistance in the form of experts from other agencies or departments, public involvement consultants, manuals and guides. There must also be adequate agency incentives for effective public involvement, to ensure that the manager is committed to its implementation; agency policy and requirements for public involvement must be clear and widely disseminated; and the individual manager must have the resources, in terms of budget and staffing, to carry out the program. Under these conditions involvement is truly a normal way of doing business within an agency.

The alternative is to build up a public involvement staff with specialized skills to run public involvement programs. But there are risks with this approach as well. The problem with the staff approach is that it separates the public involvement process from the decision maker. The public involvement or public affairs staff is put in the unenviable position of trying to translate the public's concerns to the decision maker and vice versa. Without the program manager having a sense of personal responsibility for the public involvement program, he or she is less likely to be responsive to the comments received from the public.

As a result, most agencies must find a balance between holding the individual manager accountable for the effectiveness of public involvement efforts affecting his or her programs, and ensuring that public involvement or public affairs staff provide adequate support. This means that in effect public involvement becomes a team approach, with the manager responsible for the program, but with public involvement staff providing the guidance and support to ensure that the program is a success.

COORDINATION WITHIN THE AGENCY

Once public involvement has become a way of life, there may be several public involvement programs going on at any given moment, often involving different parts of the organization. Invariably there is a need to coordinate these programs. This is to ensure that there is not unreasonable overlap, and to be certain that different groups within the agency are doing a good job of identifying when public involvement is needed. There is also a need to pinpoint deficiencies and ensure that needed support is provided. Typically this problem has been solved either by appointing a public involvement coordinator or manager, or establish ing a public involvement team consisting of the key managers most likely to be responsible for public involvement programs. Sometimes the two approaches have been combined, with the coordinator acting as the staff to the team, responsible for implementation of the team's decisions.

The advantage of the single coordinator is that one person is clearly responsible, while accountability can get blurred with a team. The advantage of a managerial team is that, when managers take responsibility for coordinating the program, the risk is reduced that they will feel that public involvement is a purely staff function. Some agencies have begun with a public involvement manager, and later – after the organization as a whole has become more committed to the need for public involvement – developed a team of managerial level people to advise the public involvement manager on the overall program.

Whether there is a single coordinator, or a management committee, the coordination function which must be performed includes these tasks:

☐ Consulting with program or project managers and assisting management in identifying upcoming issues requiring public involvement programs;

☐ Developing mechanisms ensuring that information regarding public involvement strategies, techniques, and successes or failures is transmitted across organizational lines;

☐ Coordinating training and professional development activities for people conducting public involvement programs;

☐ Assisting management in evaluating the adequacy of public involvement programs in the agency;

☐ Coordinating the preparation of media and public involvement materials that can be utilized by several or all the public involvement programs;

☐ Advising management on the need for policy or guidance regarding public involvement activities;

☐ Developing research programs to encourage innovative approaches or evaluate effectiveness;

☐ Ensuring that all organizational units involved in a given project are aware of the public involvement program and respond in a consistent manner, to avoid confusing the public or cancelling the positive effect of the public involvement programs; and

☐ Ensuring that communication continues with the public during the often lengthy time lag between planning and implementation.

HINTS TO DECISION MAKERS REVIEWING PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROGRAMS

Some factors to be considered in manage-ment's review of public involvement programs include:

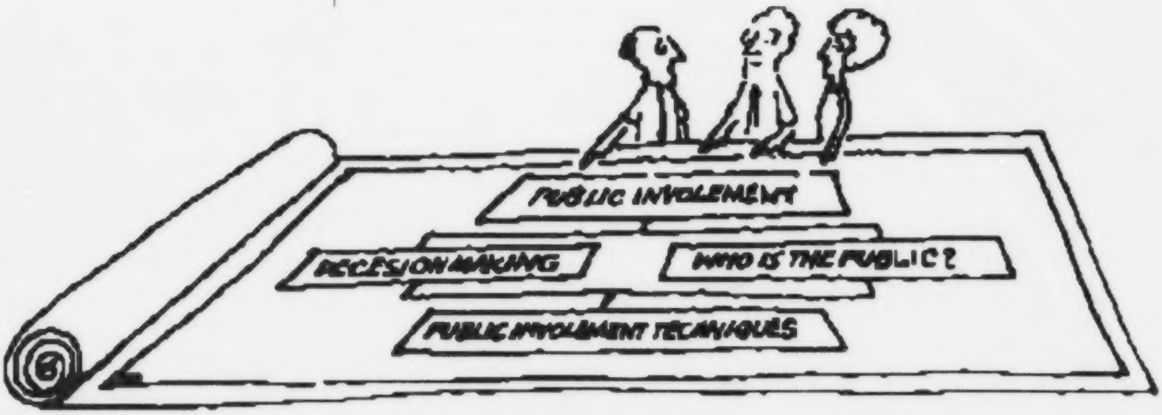
☐ **Look for links between the public comment and the decisions made.** If a public involvement program is to be at all worthwhile, it must be based on the assumption that the comments of the public will have some influence on decisions made throughout the process. If there is no visible connection between the public comment and decisions made along the way, e.g. the alternatives considered, mitigation considered, then there was probably a defect in the program somewhere, or a lack of willingness to consider public comment with an open mind.

☐ **Examine the range of publics that have been included.** One of the most frequent errors in public involvement is to consult with some of the publics, but to ignore some group that sees itself as significantly affected by the decision. This is likely to be the group that files a lawsuit, or goes outside the normal decision making process in some way.

☐ **Check for "visibility mechanisms".** In most major decisions, there are periods when technical studies are underway and the decision making process loses visibility to the public. On controversial issues, a loss of visibility can lead to suspicion of secret deals or data being altered which undermines the credibility of the technical reports when they finally emerge. Check to be sure that mechanisms are in place to maintain communication with important publics during these "low profile" periods.

☐ **Insist that documents be in the public's language.** The combination of "technicalese" and agency "bureaucratese" makes agency presentations incomprehensible and conveys the impression that the agency is trying to put up barriers to the public. Top management, which is often an organizational layer or two away from those people making the presentations, should point out blatant cases and insist on their translation into a language that the public can understand.

☐ **Role play the various interests as part of management review**. Many decisions which lock agencies into adversarial relationships could be avoided if management anticipated the probable reaction of the various publics to agency actions and responses. One way to do this is to role play the anticipated positions of the key interest groups to a proposed action, such as, "if I were a large industrial user, I would feel...". This helps train everybody to understand a range of perspectives, not just the traditional position of the agency. Of course, this kind of role play is ultimately no substitute for actual participation by interest groups.


PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT
DECISION MAKING
WHO IS THE PUBLIC?
PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT TECHNIQUES

TRENDS IN PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

This section of the manual is presented to increase the awareness of senior managers to some of the trends which are currently affecting the field of public involvement. While there are many trends which could be included, two relate closely to the issues which have been raised in this volume.

The first trend discusses techniques for senior decision makers to monitor current issues of public concern and priority. Through the techniques presented in Volume 2, the decision maker can be better prepared and more knowledgeable of the situations thereby responding in a more pro-active manner to these public and governmental issues.

The second trend relates to building concensus with the publics with which you will have to work. While this has been an ongoing strategy in the United States during the past few years, it has been slow to catch on in Canada. This is due primarily to the different political and judicial systems in the two countries. As stated by numerous American counterparts, "Whatever you do, stay away from the court system. Every project we now propose ends up going through the legal system. This is causing tremendous and costly delays on all projects". The response in the United States has been toward more public involvement programs, many of which now involve a variety of mediation and concensus building techniques.

These two trends are outlined in the following sections.

DEVELOPING AN ONGOING ISSUES MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Issues management acts as an early warning system. Instead of reacting as issues arise, an organization is able to select issues of primary importance and plan how best to affect their final resolution. Issues management is a means of helping an agency's strategic planners recognize possible changes in the external environment and plan to meet these changes. A structured program to manage issues places an organization in better control of events. It helps an organization with its vital functions of setting goals and adapting to the socio-political environment. And for those who work with external audiences on a day to day basis, it provides a "position bank" regarding what may be, or has been, said on key issues.

The actions of key public and private sector audiences and the media can have untold influence on the ability of a government agency to effectively carry out its mandate. Consequently, responding to key audiences on public policy issues or key projects has become a growing problem for larger (and not so large) government organizations. The challenge is to respond in a way that increases an organization's chances of affecting the outcome of major issues and in a manner which is consistent with what that organization has said and done previously.

The term "issues management" is actually a misnomer since issues can rarely be managed. It would be more accurate to speak of "response management". Whatever we call it, it is a systematic way of organizing many actors in a large organization to anticipate, identify, and respond to specific problems, opportunities or public policy issues in a consistent and coordinated manner.

Issues Management is a boundary-spanning function with one eye cast inside the organization, and the other focused outside, monitoring events which could affect the organization's plans.

Managing issues also performs an integrative function within an organization, and prevents inconsistent policy statements coming from the same organization. As one example, separate committees of a volunteer organization – tax and economics – were on the verge of making separate and conflicting representations to government. A structured issues management program would increase the prospect of separate groups working together to debate the issue internally and work out the best position for the organization.

An issues management system also can prevent the kind of situation where an Assistant Deputy Minister drafts a position on an issue to the press, the Minister then makes an announcement, and the staff working on the issue read about the decision in the newspaper.

An issues management system should ensure the agency's positions on key issues are updated and available to those who are relating to both internal and external audiences. Issues management involves agency response to an issue as well as planning the communicating with key publics if necessary. Development of such an issue management system is detailed in Volume Two of this manual.

ENVIRONMENTAL MEDIATION AND CONCENSUS BUILDING APPROACHES

Recently, public involvement in environmental issues has been characterized by an increasing use of concensus building approaches, and by conflict resolution techniques such as environmental mediation.

Although people in the democratic western countries have come to substitute majority rule for concensus, the political fact of life is that a well organized, committed minority can effectively veto virtually any action. The decision as to whether or not a concensus is a necessary goal for your public involvement program is based on a frank assessment of your ability to make something happen without it. If the opponents to a project have the power to veto the decision, or exact a high price by forcing a cumbersome review process, then concensus becomes the goal.

Given the highly democratic nature of many public interest groups, any move towards concensus building has to involve, directly or indirectly, much of their membership.

The Practitioners Speak.....

Let me tell you a story from the U.S. An electric power company had decided to set up a public advisory committee to review its rate structure, and asked me to help establish it. We got each member of the advisory group to agree to work towards a concensus, not just a majority vote. The way we explained it was: "Look, suppose you go to the Board of Directors and tell them we voted 14-12 in favour of a position. All you're really telling them is that you're badly divided and they're free to act in any way they want. Now if you go to them and say we support this position 26-0, they're going to have to take you seriously".

Everybody bought the idea, but the very first issue had one person holding out vehemently against the majority position. Most people just wanted to outvote her. But we reminded them that they promised to at least try to work out a consensus. So they had to stop and really listen to each other. The outcome was that they came up with a new way of providing funds for low income energy users which has since been adopted by most of the utilities in the U.S. **If you use majority vote, then you can just outvote them. but if you're trying to come up with a concensus, then you've really got to listen to each other....and the results may be impressive!!**

... a shift from confrontational approaches to a broadly based process of collaboration where interested parties, by working together, define and build on common ground.

Accepting concensus as a goal has several implications. The first requirement is to give up thinking about the problem in terms of "supporters-opponents". If a manager continues to think of people as adversaries, they will be just that. Instead, the attitude must be one of "we have to come up with an acceptable decision". The need for a concensus puts all key actors, including strong minority interests, at the negotiating table.

Above all, if a manager needs a concensus, every-body's interests must be taken seriously. The manager must think in terms of "How can I make the best deal available for each of these groups?" This does not mean that a group's stated position has to be automatically accepted. Groups may not have a realistic appraisal of what is in their best interest. What the manager does have to do is to find some way of responding to their interest, as distinct from their positions, sufficiently so that they "buy into" the eventual decision.

If concensus is to be achieved, early involvement is essential. Early involvement communicates that the agency values the ideas and concerns of out-side interests. During the early stages of decision making, it is possible for people to discuss their interests, rather than taking fixed positions. This greatly increases the likelihood that alternatives can be developed which incorporate these interests.

One of the challenges of public involvement is to learn to work effectively with people holding values other than those which have traditionally been the basis for decision making such as "economy" and "efficiency". It can be hard for agency staff to respond effectively to citizen values such as "social equity" or "environmental protection", unless they can be accommodated with little effect on "economy" or "efficiency". The result can be a cynicism about public involvement, and a return to confrontational approaches or legal battles.

The need for concensus will also mean that a manager will have to share more power throughout the decision making process. To achieve effective dispute resolution, all the key actors must be drawn into a mutual problem solving process: this means the sharing of managerial power, and also the resulting risks. Managers who share power actually gain power because they increase their understanding of the situation. Concensus building approaches should only be used if a manager has a real commitment to problem solving, not just a hope that this is a gimmick which will produce a quick agreement without any real sharing of decision making power.

Concensus does not have to mean that everybody feels equally good about the outcome. In practical political terms, a concensus simply means that all key actors agree that a decision is "the best deal available". Although all parties might have preferred a different outcome, when they look at the distribution of power, and the political forces at work, they accept that this is the best deal they are going to get.

Even this definition has limitations, because some groups believe they can get a better deal if nothing happens. Anytime a group can realistically accomplish more by immobilizing your ability to act, a concensus is unlikely. Effectively, the "best deal available" for such a group is no decision at all. If a manager needs to accomplish something now, then the decision will have to be structured in such a way that the group sees more of its interests being met by allowing the project to proceed than it does by blocking or delaying the project.

Final Thoughts from the Practitioners.....

☐ Public involvement must have two-way communication.

☐ Most decision processes will benefit from some public involvement.

☐ A public is any person or group of people with a distinctive interest or stake in an issue.

☐ The interested public will be different for every project.

☐ Use multiple techniques for public involvement.

☐ Senior management need to be involved in supporting and reviewing the public involvement program.

☐ For open communication to develop with the community, open communication is needed within the organization.

☐ Monitor current issues of public concern, as an "early warning system."

☐ If concensus is to be achieved, early public involvement is essential.

Volume

2

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PREFACE

How to Use Volume Two

The Manual on Public Involvement uses several sources of information:

❑ A questionnaire, distributed to all line managers of federal departments represented on the Steering Committee, asked the type of public involvement approaches used to date, and those techniques and methods for which further guidance was desired.

❑ A review of manuals and current literature on public involvement.

❑ A review of ten case studies of public involvement in the initial planning phases of small scale projects. These case studies are representative of all regions of Canada.

❑ The experience of noted experts each of whom has worked for many years in the public involvement field.

One of the findings of the survey was that, while data collection techniques are commonly employed, greater information was desired on consultative techniques. To effectively use such techniques, it is important to understand the decision making context in which public involvement occurs, and the public involvement process itself. The manual has been written to meet this goal. Readers are encouraged to review the material in Volumes One and Two before attempting to employ any of the techniques described in Volume Three.

The manual has been illustrated with examples drawn from the case studies to clarify and support the points being made. As well, lessons from practitioners experienced with public involvement are passed on through *"The Practitioners Speak"* - vignettes which appear from time to time in each chapter. At the conclusion of each Chapter, *"Final Thoughts from the Practitioners"* provides a summary of key points and hints to the user.

The survey indicated a wide diversity in the experience base of managers respecting public involvement. While some departments have been using public involvement for many years, other departmental representatives have little experience with public involvement.

The broad social and demographic trends which began in the '70s have brought about fundamental shifts in public attitudes and values which sustain the demands for participation.

Agencies which have initiated public involvement for the first time often find that requiring the preparation of a public involvement plan is the single most important thing they can do to get public involvement institutionalized into the organizations.

The real choice is whether public agencies learn to do public involvement well, or are forced into it, resisting at every turn. The disadvantage of resistance is that this is painfully obvious, and there is no improved relationship built with a public which sees you as consulting only under duress.

Because of this range, the manual has been developed assuming little or no previous experience with public involvement on the part of the reader. As a consequence, some of the material may be very familiar to some readers. Please refer to later sections of the manual if this is the case.

For individuals in departments or agencies of the federal government, the team hopes that this manual will assist you in "getting started" on the road to public involvement. However, remember that a manual cannot provide you with the experience base. You should contact those resource people in other departments who have had the experience. FEARO is a good place to locate contacts in other departments who may be able to assist you and provide you with pointers on public involvement based on their experience.

Finally, this volume is structured around a framework for planning public involvement programs which was initially identified in Volume One and presented here again in Chapter One.

In addition, a series of "quotable quotes" and other key factors have been highlighted where appropriate. These quotes along with the "Practitioners" quotes should be read. As a minimum, they will provide the reader with an excellent overview of the public involvement planning process.

CHAPTER 1

THE PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCESS

Volume One outlined the requirements for a public involvement process as including five distinct phases, summarized in Figure 1. These phases include a number of detailed steps which are presented in Figure 2.

A recent project, developed by Environment Canada under the leadership of the Niagara Institute, developed a set of principles and protocols for public consultation. These principles and protocols have been used in the design of a number of major consultation programs under the auspices of Environment Canada and strongly support the general thrust taken in this manual. Although the principles are not structured into a process like that described in this manual, they spell out the assumptions underlying an effective public involvement program and for these reasons are reprinted in this section:

☐ the recognition that all parties in the process have important contributions to make;

☐ the need for access to a common information base;

☐ the need for consultation on the process itself;

☐ the need for a clear statement of issues and objectives;

☐ the view that consensus building is possible, but it requires flexibility, compromise, and sufficient time and resources.

Much of the original resistance to consultation is a fear of the unknown, a fear of what could happen. But a track record of nearly fifteen years shows that most of the fears of public involvement are unjustified, and also shows that the benefits of public involvement for agencies are very tangible.

Figure 1
Phases of Public Involvement

Phase 1. Early Consultation

Early "reconnaissance" is required to determine the major public issues which could be raised by a project proposal, the likely level of public interest, the most likely participants and the key individuals who will represent them.

Phase 2. Initial Planning

Five detailed preparatory steps lead to the development of a public involvement action plan. The steps include: identifying the agency's decision making process, identifying publics, identifying special characteristics of the situation, writing specific objectives, and determining information exchange requirements.

Phase 3. Development of an Action Plan

Action planning begins with choice of public involvement methods keyed to the previous phases. The Action Plan includes establishment of intra-agency communications, commitment of resources and the scheduling of activities essential to conducting the public involvement methods selected.

Phase 4. Implement the Plan

Evaluation of the public involvement process proceeds in conjunction with monitoring of the progress of the agency's project. Evaluation of the results of public involvement is carried out according to guidelines which emphasize both participant satisfaction with the process and ultimate effect on the project.

Phase 5. Post Decision Public Involvement

Often, decision makers assume that public involvement is finished when the decision is made. This is not the case; continued involvement is important for many of the reasons early public involvement is useful. After the decision, the public can be involved in further planning, implementation, mitigation, compensation and evaluation of the project, especially with those aspects of the project affecting the public. Also, if the project does not proceed, it is very important to tell the public that this situation exists and the circumstances that led to the situation.

Figure 2

Steps in Developing and Implementing a Public Involvement Program

PHASE 1 **EARLY CONSULTATION**	❑ Informal "overview"consultation to detemine the major issues which are raised by a project proposal, the level of public interest, the most likely participants, and the key individuals who will represent them.
PHASE 2 **INITIAL PLANNING**	❑ Identification of the agency's decision making process ❑ Identification of publics ❑ Determining information exchange requirements ❑ Identification of special characteristics of the situation ❑ Clarifying objectives for the public involvement program
PHASE 3 **DEVELOPMENT OF A PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT ACTION PLAN**	❑ Schedule detailed activities and techniques for PI process ❑ Establish intra-agency communications ❑ Commit resources
PHASE 4 **IMPLEMENT THE PLAN**	❑ Carry out, monitor and evaluate the public involvement program
PHASE 5 **POST DECISION PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**	❑ Complete all requirements for post decision public involvement

*The crucial factor in designing public involvement programs is to be sure that you are very clear on **why** you are going to the public at a particular point in your decision making process. Design your public involvement programs so that public comment is as necessary at key decision points as your engineering, environmental, social or economic data.*

The Practitioners Speak.......

Never underestimate the value of just sitting down and talking to people in small groups, outside of the formal meetings. I remember one series of workshops we'd designed. I'd done my best to design some small group exercises which would give everybody a chance to speak, and really open up communication. One group which was suspicious of our motives handed out instructions as people came into the workshops telling them how to manipulate the workshop exercises to get a predetermined result. By the end of the meeting anyone who disagreed with them felt like they'd been run over by a steam roller. To top it off, after the workshop the leader of the group came up and asked if I wanted to go have a beer. What I wanted to do was pop him in the chops.

A few days later I calmed down, though, and had the beer. We agreed to hold a couple of sessions with his group and the planning team where we'd just sit down and talk. We learned a lot and so did they. One of the things we learned was to have those kinds of informal exchanges with all the major groups.

When we ran another series of workshops a few months later the same people showed up, but this time they were cooperative and supportive of giving everybody a fair shot. **The difference was they felt understood, and some trust was built between us.**

CHAPTER 2

EARLY CONSULTATION

Early consultation with the public who are interested in, or directly affected by, a proposed project is an excellent investment. Decision making processes benefit if the first phase is a "reconnaissance" of public views. It is wise to scan the broad range of issues before public statements are made and positions have been taken which must later be retracted or defended. This can save a great deal of time and effort in everything from the preparation of initial information and selection of public involvement methods to the costs if the project is cancelled.

INFORMAL CONSULTATION

Whether the opportunity arises before formal project announcements are made or after, informal consultation should be undertaken. Direct personal visits or telephone calls will provide a firsthand appreciation of what interested parties actually think and feel. Meeting the same people for the first time across a meeting floor or at a public hearing may present too great a barrier to the development of the inter-personal trust which is such a critical ingredient of successful public involvement programs. This is the time to get out of the office, get your boots muddy and hear "unvarnished" opinion.

Even if you don't have all the information assembled or analyzed for a project, it is preferable to touch base with the various publics now, rather than to wait. Let them know your schedule for obtaining the information and studies, so that if you have to say, " I don't know" in response to a query, it will be credible.

An example of the benefits of early consultation is provided by the Calgary Area Aviation Master Plan. During the initial meetings with key organizations it became apparent that quick agreement would not be possible due to conflicting interests and perspectives. It was realized that a more comprehensive planning process involving the public would be necessary. As a result, the participants developed a common understanding of the situation and of each

PHASE 1

Case Study:
Calgary Area Aviation Master Plan.

PHASE 1

Recent books on excellent managers say they do a lot of "walking around" out where things are happening. Excellent managers use this as a way of "sensing" what's really going on in their organization, instead of having it filtered through other people. Think of early consultation with the public as "walking around" with the public. You're trying to get a feel of what's really happening, You can't get a feel for an issue if you just walk around and talk to people who agree with the agency. That's of no more use to you than getting all your management data from a "Yesman." If you only get out and "walk-around" when there's a crisis brewing, then just your being out there talking to people changes the dynamic. But if you're out "walking around" with the public on a regular basis, then you are seen as a normal part of the territory, and you can sense any changes which may be harbingers of future problems.

others needs. Ultimately, the committee attained consensus on the final recommendation. This would not have been possible had the extended public involvement program not been undertaken.

IDENTIFYING MAJOR ISSUES

During informal consultation it is possible to explore the issues that may be engendered by the proposed project. This early discussion allows you to sort out those issues which are likely to cause real public concern from those which are hypothetical. Early warnings can be transmitted to the project proponent staff to see if modifications can be made before controversy is precipitated. The complexity of the project and the issues perceived by the public can set the tone for project announcements and for the internal agency preparations for public involvement.

ESTIMATING LEVEL OF INTEREST

Technical professionals usually make their own preliminary estimate of the likelihood of negative impacts of their proposed project. These estimates may depend upon extensive research or may result from qualified opinion. It is always disconcerting for professionals to have their assessment of risk challenged by public perceptions which can be at great variance with their own.

Public perceptions of risk can be volatile. Media coverage, personal experience, competing professional views, rumors and inflammatory comment may influence public perceptions more than the evidence held within the agency. Talking to the public directly can help assess the emotional climate in which your project will be received, and the kind of information that may be required about it from the moment it is announced.

Do not assume that issues which you identify will remain the same or that new issues will not arise during the process. Change is the name of the game in development projects. **It is essential that you monitor the issues over time so that you remain on top of the situation**. This process has become known as issues management and is discussed further in Appendix One.

When estimating the level of interest, it is well to remember that many public interest organizations are networked. You may face perceptions of risk and concern about issues from people experienced with projects from far distant places that could be real challenges but may also bear only superficial resemblance to your project.

A presentation technique to display critical issues to senior decision-makers has been developed and can be found in Appendix Two in this volume.

IDENTIFYING KEY PEOPLE AND ORGANIZATIONS

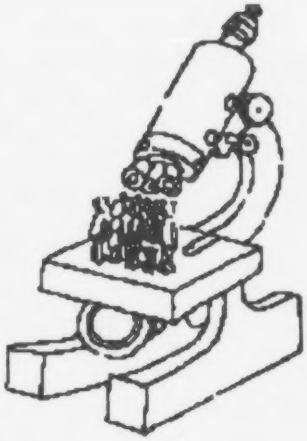
A concerted attempts to ensure that key people are identified is crucial. Interested or affected parties who are left out of the information flow may interpret this as deliberate and not an oversight on your part. Asking key people to check your list and refer you to others is a good way of making sure that no one is missed.

In identifying organizations it is useful to determine whether they have perma-

The Practitioners Speak.....

One mistake I used to make a lot was underestimating public concern because I was convinced from my own technical knowledge that there was no real problem. Then I would choose a public involvement approach at the superficial end of the scale, thinking that there was no issue. Well, of course, this would be interpreted as cavalier disregard by the public and I would take a lot of flak. I've learned that **the methods that you choose have to bear the heat that the project generates,** even if you think that the heat is unwarranted.

I have seen projects run into trouble because they failed to see that a predecessor had sensitized the public negatively. I remember one logging proposal in a public watershed that would have been controversial at the best of times, but it followed a successful battle to exclude uranium mining from the same watershed. . .



PHASE 1

Highly contentious issues cannot be resolved in a short-term public involvement program. Don't expect too much. A longer term process of consultation to gradually build consensus is required.

nent staff or are dependent on volunteers. The ability of organizations to respond to enquiry or to generate comment varies greatly with meeting schedules and organizational form. Enough must be known about the communications capacity of organizations so that you do not interpret logistic limitations as a lack of interest.

Also, contact with leaders of organizations which meet infrequently is not necessarily contact with the membership. Other organizations may have communication patterns which differ from that within your agency.

Final Thoughts from the Practitioners....

☐ Don't be afraid to informally consult with the public very early on in the process and take a reconnaissance of the issues which may be affecting a project.

☐ Remember, do not forget to identify "publics" within, as well as outside of, your organization. It is very embarrassing to find your own staff at odds with you when you go into the community.

☐ Sort out those issues likely to cause real public concern from those which are hypothetical.

☐ Do not assume that the issues which you identify will remain the same or that new issues will not arise.

CHAPTER 3

IDENTIFYING THE AGENCY'S DECISION MAKING PROCESS

PHASE 2 - STEP 1

The second phase of the public involvement planning process is the "initial planning" – undertaking the research and thought necessary to prepare an action plan. This initial planning process has five steps:

☐ identifying the agency's decision making process;

☐ identifying the publics;

☐ identifying special characteristics of the situation;

☐ clarifying objectives for the public involvement program;

☐ determining information exchange requirements.

This chapter discusses the first step, identifying the decision making process.

Each agency has decision making processes unique to its own mandate and jurisdiction. Departments concerned with parks, highways, airports, waste facilities or mines share some common patterns but have evolved practices which are strictly internal. Members of the public cannot be expected to know what these practices are, where they can intervene or what right they have to call for intervention at any given stage of a decision process.

When an agency sets out to develop a public involvement program, it should make sure that the call for public participation is linked to accessible steps in a clearly articulated decision making sequence.

THE MANDATE FOR PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Sometimes public involvement is formally mandated by legislation, policy or regulation. For example, the guidelines order governing the Environmental Assessment and Review Process (EARP) formally describes the decision making process and the points for public review. In this case, there is an established entry point for the public, and at least one method of public involvement (the public hearing) is fixed. In the case of formal hearings, public involvement is constrained to fol-

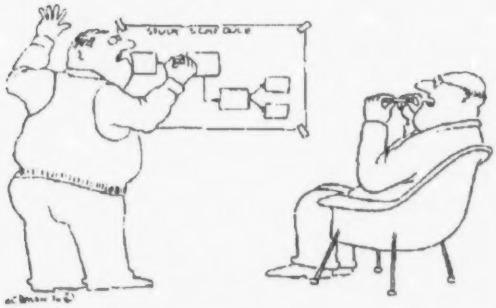
Agencies often have difficulty explaining decision making processes in simple language because the agency itself lacks clarity on the process, or is so enraptured by the details that people forget to talk about the fundamental principles behind the details. If you're having trouble explaining something to the public, use it as an opportunity to clarify your own thinking.

PHASE 2 - STEP 1

The Practitioners Speak......

When I first started working with government agencies I kept hearing from people about how they couldn't do things because their bosses wouldn't let them. They weren't permitted to make decisions. Then I met their bosses and they told me how they couldn't make decisions without the permission of their bosses. Then I met the guys at the top and they told me all about how their hands were tied. One of the reasons they claimed their hands were tied is that their staff had made so many decisions that their options were very limited.

Everybody wants to be in on "the decision". But the truth is that there isn't any single point in time at which "the decision" is made. Big decisions are shaped by all the little decisions which went before them. Someone makes a decision about how the problem is defined. Someone else makes a decision about which alternatives are considered. Someone else makes a decision about the criteria used to evaluate the alternatives. Someone else determines how much flexibility there is in interpreting the law. Once a final choice is made someone else decides how the decision is to be implemented. **Which is "the decision"? They're all important. That's a big reason why you need the public's involvement throughout the entire decision making process, and after the final decision when the implementation activities occur.**



Where do you participate the public?

low a prescribed path that demands a structured approach both by agency managers and by members of the public.

In the case of less formal mandates for public involvement, the entry points are flexible and can be negotiated to fit local circumstances. The decision making processes at this level are often themselves flexible or at least have some room for managerial discretion in their application. Most agencies' legislative mandates do provide sufficient flexibility so that the public can be involved in a decision without contravening the mandate.

In practice, an agency might face situations which lie on a continuum between the strictly formal and the informal or which may involve both formal and informal requirements at different stages in the life of a project. Public involvement early in the design stage of a project allows for flexibility of methods. If public involvement is withheld until controversy is well established, there is a strong tendency for all parties to gravitate to the formal end of the spectrum.

Regardless of the degree of formality, the agency that invokes public involvement must provide the public with an explicit statement of the decision making process in use. Failure to do so runs the risk of appearing to change the rules in mid-play when participants discover stages that managers appear to "manufacture" to suit their needs.

Flexibility of decision process is illustrated in the case of the Fort McKay Interface Committee, established by Alberta's Energy Resources Conservation Board (ERCB) as a forum in which a native community could discuss its concerns in a cooperative setting with industry and government. The committee had the mandate to discuss and debate upcoming proposals. However, if the community was not satisfied with the committee process, it could request a public hearing.

Case Study:
Fort McKay
Interface Committee

DEVELOPING DECISION SEQUENCE CHARTS

There is no substitute for an explicit sequence chart. Each decision can be divided into a sequence of steps which show the action to be taken, information elements upon which each stage is dependent, who is responsible, where the public may be included, and the implications of the decision. Each participant in a public

PHASE 2 - STEP 1

Case Study:
Fort McKay
Interface Committee

involvement process should possess a copy of the chart and it should be used to log the progress of events. This mechanism helps to keep public expectations realistically related to the agency's mandate, helps to communicate the process to senior managers or politicians, and helps to give structure to requests for budget and staff. Figure 3 presents the generic decision sequence charts for both formal and informal processes.

INVOLVEMENT AFFECTS THE PROCESS

Most decision making sequences established within an agency are developed to meet project timetables, cost imperatives and internal organizational requirements. They make sense to the professional managers and become enshrined as "standard operating procedures". When the public enters the scene there is potential for friction and for change. Even time-honored processes may need to be rethought to accommodate determined publics. The willingness of agency management to adapt existing procedures may be taken by the public as evidence of good faith.

The case of Fort McKay shows the possibility of attaining win-win results if an agency is flexible. Alberta's ERCB, in an attempt to develop a new approach to resolving conflict at Fort MeKay, spearheaded the establishment of a joint industry-government-community committee which subsequently played a major role in the review of an industry permit application, an

The Practitioners Speak....

I have run across agencies which have elaborate decision processes but no chart showing the standard sequence. When the public asks about the process, each manager explains the sequence differently from personal impressions or uses different terms, resulting in confusion of the public and embarrassment of the agency. Sometimes the preparation of a sequence chart has surprised the agency about how convoluted their own process has become and leads to useful streamlining, even before meeting with the public.

PHASE 2 - STEP 1

The Practitioners Speak.....

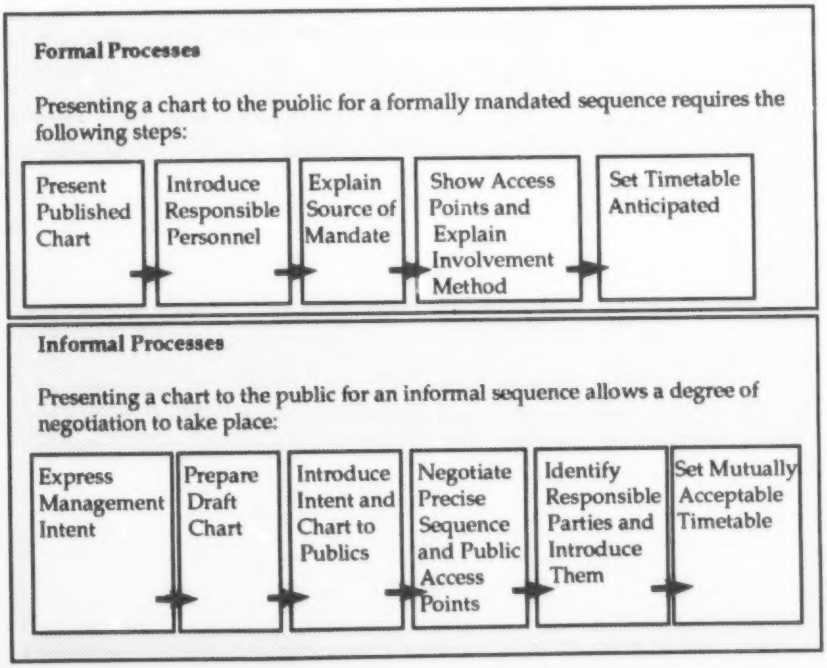
Decision making in the real world hardly ever follows a linear sequence. The pressure of events advances or retards a timetable, several steps are compressed into one or done simultaneously, flashes of insight cut through stages, or new parties to the process arrive on the scene demanding change. The value of having a charted sequence is that it acts as a framework on which to hang real events. Otherwise the unpredictable occurrences of reality look to the public like "the manipulation of a reluctant manager".

unusual step in the normal ERCB review process. The ERCB also assisted the Committee's operation by funding the services of experts.

As shown in this case study, flexibility provides agency management with the opportunity to develop public involvement programs specifically tailored to the needs of a particular project

You simply cannot make intelligent choices about what public involvement techniques you should use until you have a clear idea of what it is that you want to accomplish at each step of the decision making process.

Figure 3
Generic Decision Sequence Chart



Formal Processes

Presenting a chart to the public for a formally mandated sequence requires the following steps:

Present Published Chart
Introduce Responsible Personnel
Explain Source of Mandate
Show Access Points and Explain Involvement Method
Set Timetable Anticipated

Informal Processes

Presenting a chart to the public for an informal sequence allows a degree of negotiation to take place:

Express Management Intent
Prepare Draft Chart
Introduce Intent and Chart to Publics
Negotiate Precise Sequence and Public Access Points
Identify Responsible Parties and Introduce Them
Set Mutually Acceptable Timetable

PHASE 2 - STEP 1

When you design your decision making process you are making a statement about what matters to your decision makers. If your decision making process considers only the "tried and true" ways your agencies have dealt with problems in the past, that will be very clear to the public. If you value control more than visibility or credibility, that will also be visible. If you think some groups are more important to hear from than others, that will also be clear. Be sure, ***before you go to the public****, that your decision making process expresses the same values that you are going to tell the public you care about. Otherwise, your process speaks louder than your words.*

and the characteristics of the publics involved. In an impact assessment, public involvement at each step of the generic decision making process could eliminate the need for formal public review.

The Practitioners Speak...

I've learned that one pitfall on project sequence charts is showing public involvement as but a brief interlude on the timetable leading inevitably towards project construction. The "engineer" has budgeted two weeks for public consultation and the language assumes assent on schedule. Cries of "tokenism" result and the process comes off the rails. **Most publics are very sensitive to signals of urgency that appear to limit a reasonable chance to intervene.**

Final Thoughts from the Practitioners......

☐ Be aware that an effective public involvement process can eliminate the need for formal public review/public hearings.

☐ Be willing to show good faith in the public and adapt existing decision making procedures if called to do so.

☐ Don't tell the public you want their involvement, then only budget two weeks for it. You'll be accused of tokenism, and the whole project will lose credibility.

☐ Structure the entire decision making process for public involvement throughout, not just added onto the process, after the fact. There is no single point in time at which "the decision" is made.

☐ Explain your decision making process in simple, everyday language. If you're having trouble explaining the process to the public, use the opportunity to clarify your own thinking.

CHAPTER 4

IDENTIFYING THE PUBLICS

PHASE 2 - STEP 2

The second step of the pre-planning phase is the identification of the publics. This chapter discusses factors influencing this step.

The public is not a single entity, a monolithic whole. Rather it is constantly shifting affiliations, interests, and alliances. There are many publics, rather than "the public". These publics form in response to some perceived interest. People participate when they believe they are strongly affected and believe they can do something about it. They don't participate when they believe they are not affected or can do nothing about it. One implication of this is that "the public" changes for each public involvement program, and grows larger as a decision gets closer.

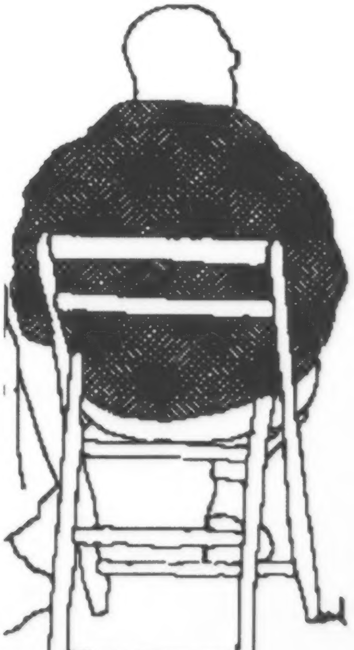
If people intensely experience an impact, they are likely to participate, and, if so, they will exert more political or media pressure than others who do not feel as severely affected. **This is political reality, and it is not limited to public involvement.**

In fact, the "Silent Majority" is a myth. It does not exist because it rests on the false assumption that somehow, because people are silent, they are in agreement. Everyone makes choices about when to participate, and may be part of the vocal minority on one issue, and be a member of the "silent majority" on others. The membership of the silent majority and the vocal minority are changing constantly. One definition which encapsulates this concept is: the "silent majority is simply a group of currently disengaged minorities".

REASONS FOR NON-PARTICIPATION

There are several reasons why people may not participate in public involvement:

❑ **They feel adequately represented by someone in the vocal minority.** Leaders of visible interest groups often serve as "surrogates" for a much larger group who feel they are represented by the activities of the surrogate. Many people belong to some



group in which they do little more than pay dues so that the group will represent their interests. In other cases, people may not pay dues or join a group, but are reassured by knowing that such a group is active.

☐ **People don't believe the impact justifies participation.** Everyone makes choices and sets priorities as to the activities in which they participate. Some people choose to participate in the daily tasks of earning a living and caring for family. Others participate actively in a number of issues. People involve themselves in those issues they believe have a significant impact on their lives. Remember, all citizens have the right to choose not to participate.

☐ **People are unaware they are affected by a decision.** If people are not told of the potential impact they may not participate because they don't realize they could be affected. When they discover this is untrue they may feel doubly betrayed - betrayed because of the impact, and betrayed because they weren't told about the impact before the decision was made.

☐ **People don't believe they can influence the decision.** Apathy is people's belief that no matter what they do they will have no influence on the outcome. Without well-defined methods by which people can influence a decision, only the best-organized interests are likely to participate. As an agency earns a track record in involving the public, its credibility is enhanced and people will feel more hopeful, less apathetic.

☐ **People believe that the decision is already made.** If the public believes that the decision has already been made, they may refuse to participate in the public involvement program, choosing other ways to make their concerns felt.

OBLIGATIONS TO THE PUBLIC

When people choose whether or not to participate, their decision is based on the amount of information they have about the impacts as well as their assessment of whether or not their participation will affect the decision. This – coupled with the dangers of decision making by small elites – creates obligations to the public which should be observed in planning and implementing public involvement programs.

☐ The federal agency has an obligation to provide information which informs the public of upcoming decisions and their potential consequences, so that people can decide on an informed basis whether or not to participate.

☐ The agency should inform the public how to participate if they choose to do so.

☐ Even if the numbers who choose to participate are small, the agency should be sure that it is hearing comments from all viewpoints, not just from a limited public such as "user groups".

☐ The agency should provide information and access to management to all interest groups, not just a limited few.

Once these obligations have been fulfilled, it is up to each individual to decide whether or not he or she wishes to participate.

In the Fraser River Estuary Management Program (FREMP), a major principle underlying the public involvement program is that of shared responsibility. The program took the initiative to foster awareness and information about the estuary and the program and was readily accessible to everyone interested. However, citizens and their public interest groups had to take responsibility to monitor FREMP and take some initiative to seek further information and present their views. FREMP did not try to send all its information to every resident of the estuary, but ensured there were ample windows for those interested to become informed and to be heard.

Guidelines For Working with the Public

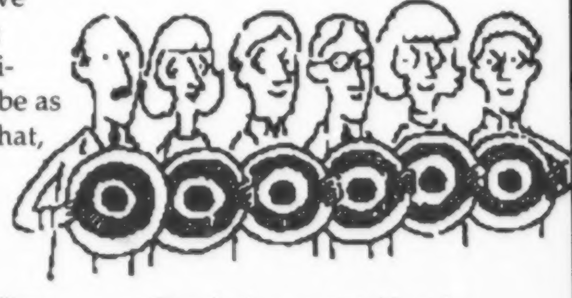
Target the public for each issue. Targeting is the process of systematically analyzing which interests and groups have a probable interest in a given issue. Note that the degree to which people feel affected is a result of their subjective perception. People that agency staff think are directly affected may not be as interested as someone that, from the agency's perspective, is only peripherally involved.

It is not the purpose in "targeting" publics to exclude people or groups. Rather, the purpose of targeting the public is:

☐ To ensure the representativeness of the active minority that will participate in the public involvement program.

PHASE 2 - STEP 2

Case Study:
Fraser River Estuary Management Program (FREMP)



Developing acceptable solutions to sensitive problems requires the involvement of all affected parties - relevant industries, the public, government departments and agencies.

PHASE 2 - STEP 2

You cannot place your own values on other people and assume that they are the same. Those of an urban native person may differ dramatically from those of a rural native person. The same is true of a commercial fisherman versus a sport fisherman. The only way to understand this is to get out and experience the issues. Your office won't give you the answer or the judgment necessary to make the right decision.

❑ To establish credibility by informing potentially affected publics, rather than have them discover they might be affected.

❑ To involve potentially affected publics early in the process while they can still exert some influence, rather than late in the process when they are forced into a supporter/adversary relationship.

Avoid the tendency to consult only with those who are likely to be supportive of a proposed action or decision, or with whom there has been effective communication in the past. For effective public involvement, those groups that are critical must be included. It is always better to hear criticisms early in the process, when the agency is not locked into a particular solution, or can make changes which respond to concerns expressed by the public. Only if all viewpoints are included is there any chance of a politically effective consensus.

It is better for an agency to be in the position of informing people that they could be affected by a decision than to have them "discover" it at a later date. When they discover it by

The Practitioners Speak......

When I started out, I assumed that public involvement meant that we had to get the involvement of John and Jane Q. Citizen. What I quickly found out is that on most issues John Q. responded with a firm: "Don't bother me". After all, it is usually more fun to stay home and watch the game than it is to go to a meeting and yell at your neighbors. Besides people have other priorities, like earning a living, which come ahead of exciting things like long range planning.

But, I also found that there were other people that I could leave out of the process only at the risk of permanent scarring. It didn't have to make sense to me why they felt they were deeply affected and their neighbor didn't. **If they felt affected by the decision, they were. The secret is to get enough good, accurate and reliable information out to the public so you can target these people before they find you.** It's always better for you to be inviting them to participate than having them saying you left them out.

Case Study:
Fraser River Estuary Management Program (FREMP)

themselves there is often the feeling that the agency is trying to put something over on them, or is misleading them somehow. This may be difficult, because some people who may be potentially interested, such as people located near a proposed project, may not be organized. In some cases it is necessary for an agency to help such interests organize, since it is usually easier to work with an organized group than with a number of conflicting individual voices.

There are many examples throughout Canada of a public agency making a decision without public involvement, only to have public opposition develop afterwards. Sometimes a project can be salvaged; at other times it has to be completely scrapped because the opposition is so intense.

In Steveston, the Fraser River Harbour Commission had already dumped dredged sand on an island in the river at a cost of $800,000, when public opposition halted the project. A consultation process was implemented to find a publicly acceptable means of disposing of dredged sand and to re- store harmony between the Harbour Commission and the community. A joint problem solving process was embarked upon, resulting in the development of an acceptable solution to the community and the government agencies. The Harbour Commission, however, was required to remove the sand already dumped. The cost of the public involvement program to develop the solution was $34,000.

Avoid underestimating the professional competence of citizens. Citizen groups are often composed of individuals with expertise and competence in subject areas relevant to the issue at hand. Because these people are outside the agency, they are sometimes able to develop solutions to project issues in ways that had not been anticipated by agency staff.

Do not ignore professional publics from associated agencies. Staff and volunteers from associated agencies may be "stakeholders" in the project and have a contribution to make.

Do not ignore the "internal publics" within the agency. The agency's own staff needs to be involved in the public involvement program and informedof a decision making process developed for the issue at hand. Some issues and decisions, for example, may have different implications for other units in the agency.

When you find people within your agency resisting public involvement, ask them what their idea is of "the public." Usually, they will respond that the public is a huge, undifferentiated mass of people. The first step in getting the staff to accept public involvement is to get them to change their image of "the public." In practical political terms, there may be some issues on which the number of crucial people to have participating is under ten; on others it may be several hundred.

Conclusions about "The Public"

The foregoing observations lead to certain basic conclusions about a definition of "the public" that is workable and democratically justifiable:

☐ **There is no such thing as "THE PUBLIC", there are only publics.** "The public", even "the majority", is really just aggregates of the millions of minorities that affiliate, collapse, and re-form on a continuous basis.

☐ **For any decision, the public consists of those people who see themselves as significantly affected.** This conclusion is based on the reality of how and why people participate. It is justifiable democratically because of the role that interest groups play and because those who perceive themselves as most affected are those who are the most visible and usually by far the most vocal.

☐ **People see themselves affected in a number of ways.** For example: proximity to a proposed project, economic gain or loss, establishing or maintaining an existing use, a social or environmental impact, or values and political philosophy.

☐ **Because people participate when they see themselves as affected, the size and composition of the public will differ for each public involvement program.** Different people will see themselves affected as issues change.

☐ **The size of the public for a particular issue increases with controversy.** This is virtually a "by definition" statement, since the word "controversy" means that there is a relatively large number of people who have chosen to be a part of the vocal minority for this particular decision.

☐ **The size of the public will increase the closer the decision is.** The impacts of decisions become clearer as the consequences are studied. As a result, more people realize they are affected and choose to participate. As alternative actions are defined during the course of a project. these alternatives in turn have impacts on new groups. Thus, the solution to one group's problem may actually be the problem from another group's perspective. Also, as the final decision gets closer, the jockeying for power among interests increases the likelihood of efforts to enlist the support of the unorganized public. As some alternatives are eliminated, or as mitigating actions are identified, some people who believed they were affected will drop out of the public involvement program. Normally this is offset by the people who begin to participate as a decision gets closer.

The most important conclusion to be derived from this discussion is that "the public" will be different for each decision. Some decisions may involve a very small - but hopefully representative - public, while other decisions will attract the interest of hundreds, even thousands, of people. One of the first tasks in designing a public involvement program is to carefully analyze which publics are likely to be interested in the decision, and what will be the intensity of interest. Nothing is quite as discouraging to agency staff than to commit major time and resources to a public involvement effort, only to have nobody interested. On the other hand, grossly underestimating public interest can lead to charges that an agency is "excluding the public", or even that it is trying to cover something up, or "cut secret deals".

Vern Millard, the former chairman of Alberta's energy industry regulatory body, the Energy Resources Conservation Board (ERCB), reported:"For several years, community involvement programs have been implemented by almost all applicants and have been of major importance in minimizing the number of hearings. However, they are not always conducted effectively and there has been a tendency by the ERCB to assume that where objections were filed to a proposed energy facility, they indicated an ineffective program.

"That explanation, however, is far too simplistic. Recent evidence shows that objections to some energy facilities are really due to the public's concerns about government standards relating to such sensitive issues as public health and safety or the environment. An applicant designs a proposed energy facility to meet government standards but if the public does not agree with them, then the problem will not be resolved by the applicant initiating a community involvement program. Clearly, those responsible for the standards (the regulatory agency and government departments) must be part of the public involvement process."

The Practitioners Speak......

During the 1970s there was one land management agency which had advisory committees for each management unit. There was a local logger who cut timber on the land, a local rancher who grazed cattle on the land, a travel guide who took hunters into the back country, and so on. These folks kept telling the agency they're doing a fine job. Which was nice except this agency was just getting creamed in the media and in parliament with the emergence of the environmental movement. The problem was that the people selected for the committee all had the same philosophy as the agency. It was like getting up, looking in a mirror, and saying: "You're doing a fine job." The participation technique they had chosen systematically excluded all those groups which were critical of the agency, so the agency only heard what it wanted to hear. **It may not be necessary to have a cast of thousands in your public participation program, but you do need to be very sure you're hearing all points of view.**

PHASE 2 - STEP 2

One of your major obligations to the public is to provide enough information so that people can make an informed choice about whether to participate.

PHASE 2 - STEP 2

The Practitioners Speak......

In one recent situation related to an offshore energy exploration program, the government agencies and the proponents held a series of public/community workshops to let the local residents know what they were planning to do. Both government and industry brought in their technical experts in biology, oil spill technology, and emergency response planning to name but a few. Everyone made the assumption that the audience would consist of the local business people, the native population, and a few-'back-to-the-landers'. Imagine the surprise they received when, in the public meetings, the back-to-the-landers turned out to hold PhD's in some of these same disciplines--in fact, better qualified than the 'experts'. It quickly became evident that the experts were out-classed and it was time to go back and do some more homework to answer the well articulated questions. It was somewhat embarrasing and certainly stressful for those involved. **The lesson....know your audience and their level of expertise before you go into a public format. If you don't have the opportunity to do this, then do your homework well. Be prepared!!!**

Far more important than the size of the public participating is its ***representativeness***. *What you can't afford is a public involvement program which selectively omits major points of view which are then expressed outside your public involvement program, through other forms of intervention including protests or lawsuits.*

Final Thoughts from the Practitioners.....

❑ Recognize your obligation to provide sufficient information to the public about the consequences of a proposed action so that citizens can choose whether or not to participate in the decision around the action.

❑ There are many publics; **the public** is made up of constantly shifting affiliations, interess and alliances.

❑ Ensure that you do a good job of defining the issues so that you can target **all** the publics likely to be affected and approach them, rather than having them find out through other means and approach you instead.

❑ There is no such thing as the "layman" anymore. Many of the publics now have more experience than the people who run public involvement programs.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYZING THE SPECIFIC SITUATION

PHASE 2 - STEP 3

This chapter focuses on the third step in the initial planning phase, examining the detailed specifics of an issue. In developing a public involvement plan it is essential to identify all the factors which come to bear on the project. In this way an appropriate approach can be developed and public involvement techniques selected which meet the special circumstances of a given issue.

Four sets of factors can affect the approach and selection of techniques for a public involvement process:

☐ Characteristics of the Project or Policy Issues;
☐ Characteristics of the Public;
☐ Characteristics of Other Key Agencies; and
☐ Characteristics of the Decision

A combination of these factors will ultimately determine the overall approach which you will have to take in preparing your Action Plan and, ultimately, the overall public involvement program.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PROJECT OR POLICY ISSUES

Project or policy issues need to be examined according to several factors:

Technical Complexity - The level of technical complexity may result in the need for much more public information so that the public(s) can understand what issues are most crucial. This information must be written so anyone can understand it.

Geographic Extent - Different approaches and techniques may need to be used depending on the size of the geographic region; a high density urban area may need to be treated much differently from that of a large rural area, even though they may have the same total population.

Scope of Interest - Some issues may be of interest only to the client group or to technical experts, while other issues are of interest to the broadest public audience. Appropriate techniques must be used to reach these different audi-

PHASE 2 - STEP 3

Case Study:
Swan Hills Special Waste Treatment Centre

Reactionary people can become positive contributors if they feel part of the process.

ences. Understanding these audiences is key in this process.

Perceived Risk - The perceptions of the risk of a project sometimes vary among different public groups and the sponsoring agency. This may mean that a variety of techniques may be necessary for different potentially affected groups.

The public involvement process for the Swan Hills Special Waste Treatment Centre illustrates how a process was influenced by the particularly sensitive nature of the project. Early in the process, public acceptability was identified as a critical objective in siting the facility, as important as the technical criteria. This overriding factor influenced subsequent steps, including an emphasis on openness of information, and the decision to only consider communities which showed interest in the possible project, after receiving information about the project.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PUBLIC(S)

The manager of the public involvement program needs to examine the nature of the public which is being asked to participate:

Informed/Uninformed - The level and accuracy of information provided to the public prior to a project proposal may affect both the requirement for information as well as the development of ways to make the information more credible to the public.

Hostile/Apathetic - Hostility or apathy may be reactions to either the issue or to the agency and its history of trust with the public. If hostility is a factor, the public involvement techniques selected must allow for venting the hostility before any constructive work can be achieved. Conversely, if the public(s) are apathetic, enough information must be provided to allow individuals to determine if they want to participate.

Divided/United - If a public is united over an issue it means the agency knows where it stands and can work toward resolution knowing what it must work with. Divided publics are more difficult to respond to as they may be divided on many issues, not only those related to the specific project. It may be impossible to have these publics work together even if they eventually agree on the project specific issues.

Local, Provincial or National Interests - Whether the publics are from the local or regional area, or are provincial and national organizations, will influence the requirements of the public involvement process. When national interest groups "parachute" into local/regional issues, hostilities can arise quickly between these "publics" as the different perspectives become apparent.

History of Public Involvement in the Region - If prior public involvement activity in the region has been viewed as successful by the public, then it is often much easier to work with interest groups again. If prior experiences have been bad then it may take much more time, information and energy to work with a skeptical public.

Maturity of the Conflict - Issues in the early stage of formation may be easier to manage or work with than those that have evolved or reached a stage of entrenchment where no one is willing to move from an adopted position. It is much better to identify issues as early as possible so that the publics are still willing to look at alternative courses of action. A discussion of identifying and managing issues is outlined in Appendix One.

One method of analyzing the various publics is through "Policy Profiling". This is described in Volume Three, Dictionary of Techniques.

CHARACTERISTICS OF OTHER GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Federal Agencies and their Constituencies - Other publics can include other associated or competing agencies at the federal level. What is often forgotten is that these agencies also may bring their own constituencies with them representing a much larger group than ever anticipated. These constituencies must be recognized and included.

Provincial/Territorial Counterparts - Other publics also include any provincial/territorial agencies where the federal department may be developing a public involvement program. These provincial agencies may also bring their sets of constituencies with them.

Devolution of Responsibilities - At present the federal government is devolving many responsibilities to the Yukon and Northwest Territorial Governments as

PHASE 2 - STEP 3

People sometimes become entranced with the technology of public involvement, fascinated with some particular technique or even the use of sophisticated computer technology. However, there's no substitute for a program that's appropriate to the issue, the audience, and the agency. More is not necessarily better, unless it is required by your unique circum-stances. ***Your challenge is to design a program which uniquely fits the needs of your situation,*** *rather than impose a predetermined methodology which may have worked sensationally on another issue, but just doesn't make sense in the particular situation.*

well as to native organizations across Canada. The situation is fluid and it is essential that anyone planning a public involvement program related to these jurisdictions be aware of the status of devolution and incorporate it into their planning.

Local Government/Native Government - The role of local and native governments as key publics is growing in Canada. It cannot be assumed that all native communities or local governments will have the same viewpoints on issues. The public involvement plan must adequately address meeting the needs of local and native governments.

Simultaneous Activities - It must be remembered that one agency is never acting alone in any setting. Anyone developing a public involvement program must be aware of the activity of other agencies (or other branches of their agency) in the region.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DECISION

he nature of the decision to be made will influence the public involvement program and the techniques selected. Decision types include:

☐ A policy decision affecting agency operating procedure at a broad level.

☐ A regulatory decision, again affecting operating procedure but at a more detailed level.

☐ A field decision relating to a specific issue relevant only in a given field situation.

Final Thoughts From the Practitioners.....

☐ Be sure to take the time to pre-plan the PI program, and analyze the specific characteristics of the issue which will affect the selection of an approach and of techniques.

☐ Be sure that you design a program which uniquely fits the needs of your situation, rather than impose a pre-determined methodology which may have worked well in another situation, but doesn't make sense here.

CHAPTER 6

ESTABLISHING PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT OBJECTIVES

PHASE 2 - STEP 4

This chapter presents the fourth step of the initial planning process, the setting of objectives.

At this point, the manager ill ave already completed the following:

☐ Undertaken a preliminary "reconnaissance" to assess the level of public interest.

☐ Defined and clarified the decision making process and examined the opportunities for public involvement.

☐ Identified the "public" for the issue at hand.

☐ Examined the issue according to a number of specific situation characteristics.

The information derived from these steps will enable the manager to develop objectives for the public involvement program. This stage entails detailing exactly why the project manager wants to involve the public, what is the public's role, and what the project manager expects to achieve through public involvement.

Setting objectives is crucial; the nature of the objectives will influence the nature of the program and the degree of public involvement. Objectives may vary at each stage, as a project manager may want or need to accomplish different requirements at different stages.

WHEN IS PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT NEEDED?

Many efforts to define when public involvement is needed focus on the relative significance of the decision, or the extent to which it is controversial. One difficulty in using such criteria is that "significance" is in the eye of the beholder. An issue which looks relatively insignificant to an agency may be seen as very significant by an interest or user group. And by the time an issue becomes controversial, opportunities to prevent polarization may have been lost. A more useful approach is to consider which decisions are "political" and which are "technical".

Many questions considered by line managers to be technical decisions actually contain important assumptions about equity, distribution of wealth, acceptable levels of safety, and environmental protection. These are all topics which the public sees as very potitical.

Guidelines: When Public Involvement is Needed

There are four general rules that can be used to determine when public involvement is needed:

☐ **Public involvement is needed when positive public support for a proposed action or decision is desired.** Whenever an agency needs active public support, and not just passive acquiescence, there is a need for public involvement. Involvement is a means by which individuals and groups "buy into" a decision and actively support its implementation. And while public involvement may not guarantee support for a decision, if a decision or action is controversial, support is unlikely without it.

☐ **Public involvement is needed whenever a key public perceives that it has a lot to win or lose by a decision.** The key word in this guideline is "perceive". Any issue regarding health or safety in relation to toxic wastes, sour gas or nuclear energy tends to be perceived by the public as extremely significant, even though an agency may see the probability of risk as low.

☐ **Public involvement is needed when the results of a decision will significantly affect the economic, social, or political interests of some people or groups more than others.** Beyond the questions of the extent of potential benefits or costs, there is the question of equity of their distribution. The most controversial decisions involve significant benefits and costs that are not distributed equally among different groups.

☐ **Public involvement is needed when a decision will significantly affect an already-existing controversy in the community.** Sociologists refer to "cleavages" within communities—issues which already divide the community and are the basis for continuing political competition. Examples include the competing interests of downtown merchants and suburban merchants, "old-timers" versus newcomers, and pro-growth versus limited growth groups. Public involvement is particularly necessary in situations where an agency's decision would tend to strengthen the position of one side or the other in such a conflict.

The nature of the public involvement program developed will depend upon such factors as the nature of the project, the amount of public interest, and any constraints imposed upon the agency.

For example, with a highly sensitive project such as a nuclear power plant or a hazardous waste treatment plant, it can be expected that the public will demand to be heard. It is essential that the agency be clear and open about the project objectives and avoid promoting unrealistic expectations. At the same time, it is important to provide a forum at which the publics' ideas are heard and taken seriously.

In another situation, public interest may be limited to a few interest groups and individuals. In this case, these groups would be the focus of the public involvement program, but with periodic checks with the larger public.

In some projects, the agency's alternatives may already be severely constrained by legal or regulatory constraints. In this situation, it may be better for the agency to take the political and public consequences of making a unilateral decision, rather than spending the time and energy of both the staff and the various publics in developing a public involvement program that has no meaning and will not be used in the end, anyway. However, on the whole, an agency should involve the public, even when the decision cannot be altered.

Public involvement can address issues such as the mitigation of the environmental or social impacts of an action, or the nature of the safety program for a facility, without necessarily taking on the fundamental question of whether or not the action should be taken.

In conclusion, almost all decision processes will benefit from public involvement at each stage of project planning and implementation. The thrust of this manual is to encourage the increasing use of public involvement at early stages in project planning.

PHASE 2 - STEP 4

Set realistic objectives for the public involvement process, and be frank about the limitations of results. Define legal or resource supply constraints and those items that must be decided at the political level. Indicate the approximate time necessary to obtain results. Make sure people's expectations are within the terms of reference when objectives are set by the working group.

PURPOSES OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

After determining whether public involvement is necessary, the project or line manager will need to clarify the general objectives for the program. These can encompass:

☐ tapping technical and local expertise of residents;

☐ using the experience and know-how of the public to develop creative solutions to problems;

☐ reducing later delays and costs from not having involved the public;

☐ creating the opportunity for the public to be heard before a decision;

☐ enabling the public to influence a decision;

☐ building public knowledge about a decision; and

☐ accessing field data (for example, obtaining information on residents' demographic profile or opinions).

DEVELOPING PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT OBJECTIVES FOR EACH STAGE IN THE PROCESS

Developing a public involvement program requires a thoughtful planning exercise. It is possible to guide project managers in this planning exercise, but it is not possible to provide simplistic answers in the selection of techniques for different situations. The steps outlined in previous chapters have provided the project manager with the information needed to develop objectives for each stage of the process.

A generic example of objectives tied to stages is provided in Figure 4. In a real situation, objectives developed would be de-tailed and issue-specific. The development of these objectives will guide the manager in identifying information exchange requirements (Chapter 7), and ultimately, in selecting public involvement techniques (Volume Three).

Figure 4
Developing Objectives

Stage	Objectives
Issues Identification/ Sensing Public Interest	Obtain a complete understanding of how the issue is viewed by all significant interests.
	Identify the level of interest in future public participation activities on this issue.
Detailed Identification of Impacts	Undertake a scoping exercise to identify the most significant impacts.
Assessment of Impacts	Develop a complete understanding of the impacts as viewed by the public.
	Assess the relative merit assigned to the project by various interests, including their reasons for these evaluations.
	Develop understanding of possible mitigation procedures, as viewed by the public.
Decision Making	Make a decision that is technically, economically and socially feasible, and politically acceptable.
Post Approval Decision Making	Develop all requirements for public involvement following the decision.

PHASE 2 - STEP 4

You can't make intelligent choices about what public involvement techniques you should use until you have a clear idea of what it is you want to accomplish ***at each step*** *of your decision making process. Remember, what you want from the public changes at each step. When you're "scoping out" an issue you want, and have available for the public, different kinds of information than when you're trying to evaluate alternatives.*

PHASE 2 - STEP 4

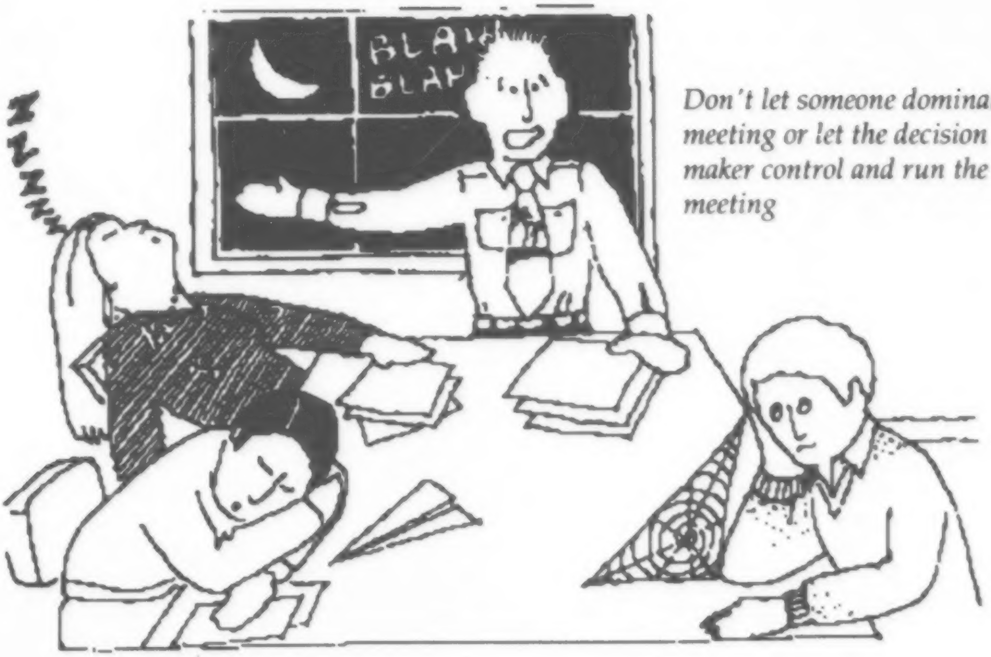
One of the reasons for being very clear on what you want is that the public is often very obliging and will give you exactly what you ask for. Ask a dumb question, and you'll get an answer which may not be very helpful. But it wasn't the public's fault!

Final Thoughts from the Practitioners.....

❑ Clearly establish what you want to achieve with the public involvement program.

❑ Remember the importance of early public involvement.

❑ Make sure that objectives are developed for each stage of the public involvement program outlining what is to be



Don't let someone dominate the meeting or let the decision maker control and run the meeting

CHAPTER 7
DETERMINING THE INFORMATION EXCHANGE REQUIREMENTS

This chapter describes the final step in Phase Two of the "Public Involvement Planning Process", identifying the total range of information needed by both the agency and by the public.

Before the public can participate effectively, it must be adequately informed. This means that there is a significant public information component in every public involvement program. However, a public involvement program comprises more than just public information. The difference between the two is that public involvement stresses two-way communication, while public information stresses getting information to the public.

INFORMATION EXCHANGE AND THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS

The completion of Step Four resulted in a clear understanding of what needs to be accomplished with the public at each step in the decision making process. In Step Five the task is to define the type of information that is needed from the public, and to establish guidelines for the information that must be given to the public.

A useful and manageable way of handling this step is to design a series of charts, one for each step in the process. Each chart would outline:

☐ the relevant step in the decision making process (from Chapter 3)
☐ the various publics who should be involved in this step (from Chapter 4)
☐ any special circumstances (from Chapter 5)
☐ the objectives for the public involvement program (from Chapter 6)

Once the public involvement action plan is completed (Chapter 8) each chart could be expanded to include the techniques selected for the given situation. Figure 5 presents a series of charts for a generic decision making process, showing how the selection of objectives influences the information exchange. In this example, each stage of the process has its own set of PI objectives,

PHASE 2 - STEP 5

The thing I learned from the government's information program is that special wastes aren't as scary as the public perceives them to be. The way I see it, the more you learn, the less scary the subject becomes.

its own information exchange, and ultimately would have its own unique set of techniques. In this manual, general terms are used; a more detailed and specific description of the information exchange will be needed in actual situations. Some of the Environment Canada, Parks case studies reviewed for this manual provide good examples of using different techniques at differest stages in the process, depending on what the objectives are at each stage and what information needs to be exchanged. For example, the planning process for both the Bruce Peninsula National Park and the Mingan Archipelago National Park Reserve combined a wide range of techniques, including:

-information packets
-information meetings
-open houses
-newsletters
-direct contact with individual house holds
-establishing committees to examine special issues

PHASE 2 - STEP 5

Figure 5
Detailing the Information Exchange for Each Stage in a Generic Decision Making Process

STAGE 1:
ISSUE IDENTIFICATION/SENSING PUBLIC INTEREST

Public involvement objectives:

1. Obtain a complete understanding of how the problem is viewed by all significant interests.
2. Identify the level of interest in future public participation activities surrounding this issue.

Information to the public:

The nature of the study and decision making process.
What the agency presently knows about the problem/ issue.
The kinds of public participation activities possible.
The issues that are likely to arise.

Information from the public:

How different groups see the problem.
How the problem affects them.
The intensity of the impacts.
The publics that are interested in or affected by the problem.
Which publics want to participate.
How intensely the groups want to participate.
Which techniques are most acceptable or suitable.

Special circumstances:

Public involvement techniques:

Clarity on what information you need from the public takes the public involvement objectives one step further. You must be very specific about exactly what information you need. This will also tell you who can provide that information. Some information can only come from local governments, (e.g. local zoning or planning requirements), while information about public values should come from a cross-section of the public.

PHASE 2 - STEP 5

Figure 5
(continued)

STAGE 2:
DETAILED IDENTIFICATION OF IMPACTS

Public involvement objectives:

1. Develop a list of significant impacts.

Information to the public:

A summary of the problem as defined in Stage 1.
The range of impacts known to the agency.
Factors usually considered in the analysis stage.

Information from the public:

Additional impacts known to the public.
Additional factors that the public believes should be included in the analysis.

Special circumstances:

Public involvement techniques:

Figure 5
(continued)

STAGE 3:
ASSESSMENT OF IMPACTS

Public involvement objectives:

1. Develop a complete understanding of the impacts, as viewed by the public.
2. Assess the relative merit assigned to the project by various interests, including their reasons for their evaluations.
3. Develop understanding of mitigation procedures possible, as viewed by the public.

Information to the public:

The factors and methodology used to assess the project, including any weighting factors.
A description of the final evaluation and decision making process.

Information from the public:

Additional impacts, including the importance of the impacts.
Additional factors that need to be analyzed.
Suggested methodology for assessment.
What various publics like and dislike about the project.
Modifications to the project that could make it acceptable.
Rankings of alternative solutions

Special circumstances:

Public involvement techniques:

When providing information to the public it's not enough to hand people a six-inch stack of material and say; "Here's the information, react!" The information has to be presented in a form which can be digested. If you're running a workshop to evaluate alternatives, for example, the challenge will be to present information about the alternatives in a brief, succinct manner, yet provide sufficient information so that people can give you an informed reaction.

PHASE 2 - STEP 5

Don't assume that as soon as you've completed your authoritative text on "everything anybody would want to know" that your job is done. Now you've got to make that information usable.

Figure 5
(continued)

STAGE 4:
DECISION MAKING

Public involvement objectives:

Make a decision that is technically, economically and socially feasible, and is also politically acceptable.

Information to the public:

The proposed recommendation on the project/issue.
Reasons for the choice/factors used in the decision making.
Process for making the final decision.
Final decision.
Reasons for decision.

Information from the public:

Reactions to the proposed recommendation.
Modifications that could make the decision more acceptable.
Recommended implementation steps.

Special circumstances:

Public involvement techniques:

The Practitioners Speak.....

Never forget the "$10,000 worth of graphics" rule. If you come into a meeting displaying a proposed action, all lovingly prepared with beautiful graphics and maps, and then you tell the audience that you're open to considering alternatives, they are never going to believe you. The public is smart enough to know that any agency that spends $10,000 on graphics to sell its plan isn't about to change it. If you want to go in with something that is going to be treated as preliminary, it had better look preliminary. Well done drawings or lettering on flip chart sheets may do the job better than fancy graphics. Or make up enough maps so that the public can draw alternatives all over them. Some of these little things tell the public whether you really mean it or not.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND TRADITIONAL PUBLIC RELATIONS

To be credible, public involvement requires objectivity and a willingness to consider all points of view. Traditional views of public relations in an agency are that this function may reduce objectivity in order to present the agency in a favourable light.

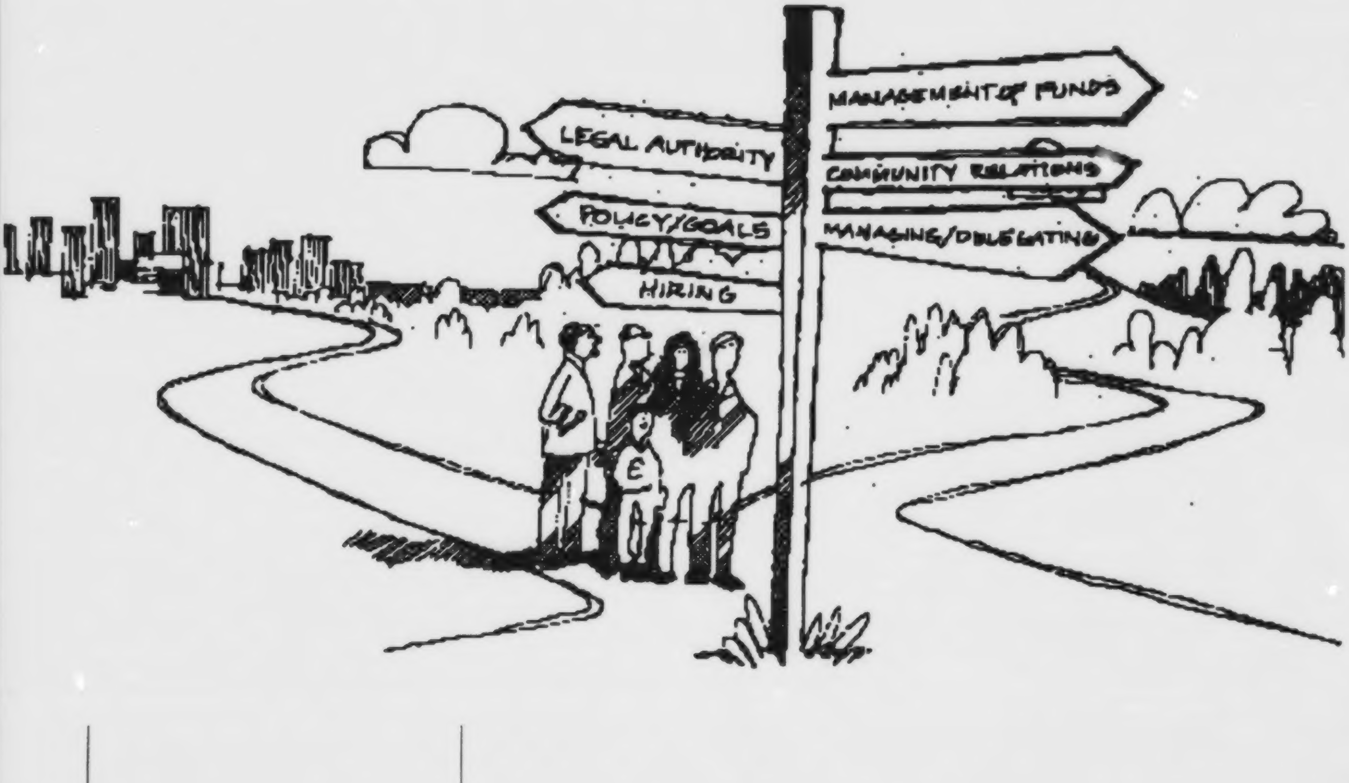
Materials which suggest that an agency or department has a pre-determined position, or suggest an unwillingness to hear criticisms or alternative ideas, will seriously undermine the public involvement effort. The purpose of all materials used in public involvement is to provide adequate information to the public(s) so people can participate effectively, not to convince the public of a department's answer. Guidelines for dealing with the media are beyond the scope of this publication; other references are available on media or public affairs programs.

Final Thoughts from the Practitioners.....

☐ The public must be adequatly informed before the public can participate effectively.

☐ Give careful thought in advance to the kinds of information required from and to be given to the public at each stage of the process.

☐ Be prepared for unfair criticism; no matter how well planned your public information programs, you still may receive complaints about quality, quantity, appropriateness, and distribution of information.


MANAGEMENT OF FUNDS
LEGAL AUTHORITY
COMMUNITY RELATIONS
POLICY/GOALS
MANAGING/DELEGATING
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CHAPTER 8

DEVELOPING A PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT ACTION PLAN

PHASE 3

This chapter describes the third phase of the public involvement planning process, preparing the public involvement action plan.

Having a public involvement plan in hand prior to embarking on a public involvement program is essential, even in the case of relatively small scale projects where the mandate for public involvement is informal.

Past experience shows that preparing a plan is a necessary step for successful public involvement. Public involvement is a professional activity, and requires the same kind of careful planning and analysis as other comparable activities.

PREPARING A PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN

The detailed action plan would not normally be prepared until after some preliminary consultation activities (Phase 1) and the analytical steps of the preplanning phase (Phase 2). Figure 6 reviews the phases of the PI planning process which have been introduced in this manual.

Chapters 2 to 7 lead you through the analysis needed to prepare a plan. Chapter 3 identified the importance of clarifying the decision making process. Chapter 4 described techniques for identifying the public (the publics) who will be concerned with the issues at hand. Chapter 5 described how to identify specific characteristics of the situation which will influence the selection of objectives. Chapter 6 described the process of developing public involvement objectives for each stage of the process.

Chapter 7 described ways to identify the exchange of information which will need to take place between your agency and the public. Now you are being asked to use all this analysis to prepare a plan. The following section outlines and discusses the contents of the plan. These are summarized in Figure 7.

THE PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN'S KEY CONTENTS

a) Informal Consultation Activities:
Describing the preliminary consultation activities demonstrates that key interests have been consulted, and gives credibility to the description of issues, interested publics, and the assessment of the intensity of interest.

b) Description of Issues:
This description allows management or public groups reviewing the document to assess the likely interest of the various publics, and evaluate the adequacy of the proposed plan. This section also alerts management to upcoming issues which may be controversial.

c) Intensity of Interest:
This is the staff's estimate of how controversial the issues are likely to be, and the rationale for the level of public involvement activity shown in the plan.

d) Interested Publics: The reason for identifying the interested publics, and their reasons for being interested, is so that people reviewing the plan can make their own assessment of how controversial the issue will be, and whether the proposed public involvement plan is adequate.

e) Decision Making Process:
The decision making process is the framework into which the public involvement activities must be integrated. If an agency's decision making process is not well defined, the need to prepare a public involvement plan may act as an internal catalyst to define the process.

f) Objectives:
An explicit statement of objectives is essential to convey intended outcomes. Agreement on objectives must be obtained from all parties or people will find later that it is too easy to lapse into cross purposes or endless controversy about choice of methods. Clearly stated objectives form the basis for later monitoring and evaluation.

g) Plan of Activities: This is the heart of the plan. The sequential plan of activities should include all related activities such as public information reports or other publications, news releases or other media-related activities, planning meetings, dry-runs of presentations, and the means of keeping agency personnel informed. Since the plan requires coordination between various groups in the agency, listing responsibilities and deadlines identifies required lead time and

Figure 6
Developing a Public Involvement Action Plan

Phase 1 - Early Consultation

- Consult Informally
- Identify Major Issues
- Estimate Level of Public Interest
- Identify Key People and Organizations

Phase 2 - Initial Planning

- Chart Decision Making Process
- Identify Publics
- Identify Situation Characteristics
- Establish Public Involvement Objectives
- Determine Information Exchange Requirements

Phase 3 - Develop Action Plan

- Choose Methods
- Establish Internal Communications
- Commit Resources
- Schedule and Assign Work

Phase 4 - Implement the Plan and Evaluate

- Implement
- Monitor the Public Involvement Action
- Evaluate Results

Phase 5 - Post Decision Public Involvement Plan

- Develop Post Decision Requirements
- Implement as Required

PHASE 3

Use numerous techniques to reach different kinds of people..

Figure 7
Generic Table of Contents for a Public Involvement Action Plan

1. **Introduction, Description of the Project**

2. **Summary of Phase 1 - Early Consultation**

   - the process of informal consultation used
   - major issues identified
   - estimate of level of interest
   - key people and organizations

3. **Summary of Phase 2 - Initial Planning**

   - decision process chart
   - identified publics
   - situation description
   - public involvement objectives
   - information exchange requirements

4. **Phase 3 - Action Plan**

   - selection of methods to be used
   - internal communications arranged
   - budget and staff commitment
   - work schedule, assignments and deadlines

5. **Phase 4 - Implement the Plan**

   - complete all requirements for implementation, and evaluate

6. **Phase 5 - Post Decision Public Involvement**

   - complete all post decision requirements resources from other groups in the organization.

h) Budget and Staffing:
The budget and staffing estimate will normally receive only internal review. The preparation of these budget and staffing estimates provides a mechanism for management control and also establishes a commitment for the level of support the program can expect to receive from other parts of the organization.

i) Public Review:
Review of public involvement plans by those publics who are most likely to participate is encouraged. If the plan is seen as ade-quate, fair and providing good visibility, it will lend legitimacy to whatever decision finally results.

j) Evaluation:
Be sure to build in checkpoints, places at which you can stop to re-assess the adequacy of your program, based on public response.

The Practitioners Speak.....

Most of the time people want to get out of doing public involvement. But once everybody believes it's really going to happen, then suddenly you find all kinds of turf battles developing. The program manager thinks she should be in charge, the public information officers thinks he should be in charge, the local manager on the ground thinks she should be in charge, the people handling government relations think they should be in charge.

I started insisting on public involvement plans originally just so we'd force ourselves to do a good job of analyzing the situation. But what I've discovered is that it's also the best way I know to resolve these "turf battles". Now it's not a part of the organization which is in charge, it's "the plan" which is in charge, and the public information officer, the local manager, and the governmental affairs woman all know what's expected of them. **Public participation plans started out being a way to improve communication with the public, but they may be just as important for getting people inside the organization to talk to each other.**

PHASE 3

Case Study:
Canadian Superior Oil Sour Gas Well

Be sure to build in check-points at which you stop to re-assess the adequacy of your program based on public response. Don't assume that this will always mean increasing your program. Not infrequently you'll find issues you thought were going to be controversial don't justify the level of program you had anticipated.

This may not always mean increasing the size or extent of your program. If an issue is not as controversial as you had anticipated, the program can be scaled down.

A project which benefited from public involvement planning was undertaken by Canadian Superior Oil Ltd. in Hinton, Alberta. The project was a "critical" sour gas well to be drilled near the town. Before any field activities in the community were carried out, the staff had:

☐ received full support of company management;

☐ received a clear set of operating guidelines established by the company respecting the communications process, the goals of the involvement program, and the commitments management could or could not make;

☐ discussed with management the nature of any constraints imposed on the public involvement program; and

☐ developed an outline of the steps to be followed and techniques to be used.

LENGTH AND COMPLEXITY OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLANS

A public involvement plan can vary in length from a single page to many, depending on the complexity of the program. The plan is not intended to be a bureaucratic formality, but a flexible document that provides a structure for analyzing the requirements of the situation. The criteria which can be used to determine the adequacy of detail of a public involvement plan are:

☐ It should be sufficiently detailed to permit development of budget, staff, and schedule estimates;

☐ It should allow management to assess the adequacy of activities planned in relationship to the level of public interest; and

☐ It should provide sufficient information so that it is intelligible to any public interest groups who review the plan.

The shortest document that meets these purposes is the best.

Not all the analysis completed in previous chapters will be included in the public involvement plan. You might, for example, choose to exclude your description of special circumstances or the detailed information exchange. That kind of analysis is necessary to prepare the plan; it is not mandatory that all this pre-analysis be included in the plan. It may be easier to simply show a series of tasks, with deadlines and responsibilities assigned. The key question is whether management or the public needs this material to evaluate the adequacy of your plan.

THE ACTIVITY STATEMENT

A potentially controversial project may justify preparation of activity descriptions for each major step in the public involvement plan, to show why the technique or activity was selected, and how it relates to program objectives. The activity descriptions ask the following questions:

- ☐ What are the specific objectives of the activity?
- ☐ How is the activity designed to meet these objectives?
- ☐ Who are the target publics (specifically)?
- ☐ What are the issues that are anticipated to arise at this point?
- ☐ What level of public interest is expected?

As a sample, a completed Activity Statement for a public meeting is shown as Figure 8.

The information provided is essential for management review, and also helps the staff to think the plan through very carefully. However, on some projects, requiring Activity Statements could make the process of developing a public involvement plan overly bureaucratic and thus wasteful, when a simpler summary of the plan would be sufficient. The decision on the level of detail must be made by the public involvement manager.

Figure 8
Sample Activity Statement Form

Activity statement number: ____________
Est. date of activity: ___________________

Activity: Public Meetings in Glenville and Rockford

Objectives of the activity:

1. Identify health, safety, or nuisance concerns of residents of Rockford & Glenville regarding construction of Power Plant #3 beginning June '83.
2. Identify mitigation actions the company can take to respond to these concerns.

How objectives will be met:

These workshops will provide an opportunity for residents of the area to identify what their concerns are about the impacts of construction on Power Plant #3, which will begin in approximately six months. The workshops are being co-sponsored by church groups in both towns, who have arranged newspaper publicity and a handout to be sent home with school children, and have organized a phone campaign to ensure attendance.

The meeting will have three parts. During the first part of the meeting, representatives from the company will describe the timing and nature of the construction on Power Plant #3. A question and answer session will then follow. After the question and answer session the audience will be broken up into small work groups which will be asked to brainstorm lists of their concerns and rank their importance on individual hand-in response forms.

The results of these workshops will be reviewed with the Citizen Task Force, and the company will then work with the task force to develop mitigation plans. These plans will then be presented in another round of public meetings.

Target publics:

These meetings are aimed specifically at residents of these two communities, rather than regional publics. The meetings will be targeted for a cross-section of "typical" residents, rather than organized interests.

Anticipated issues:

1. Construction worker housing.
2. Overcrowding of schools, hospitals, other community services.
3. Danger to school children from truck traffic.

Expected interest level: Very high.

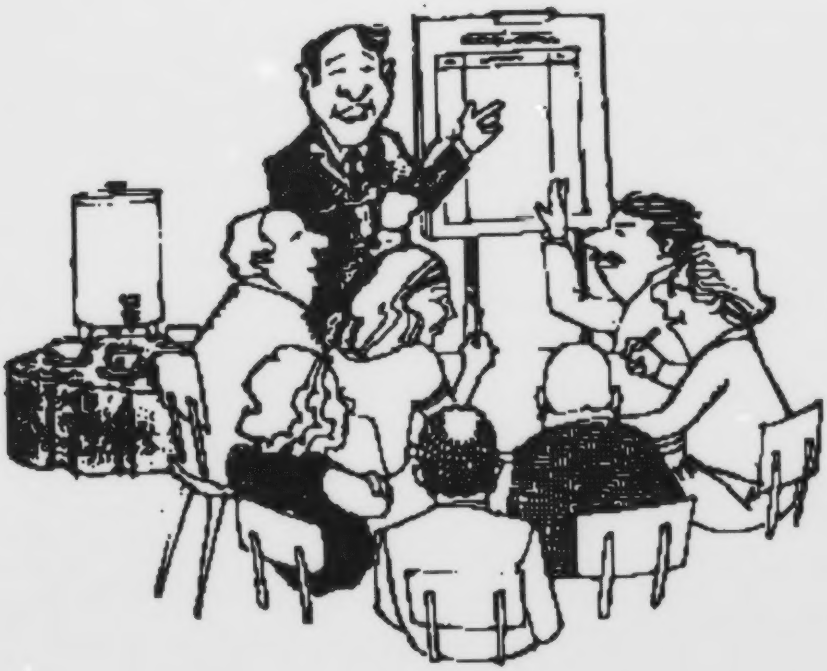
Timing is everything – You can develop the most elaborate program which may take months or years to implement. You may get the best possible involvement and the best data, but if the decision was made months before, of what value was the public involvement program?

Final Thoughts from the Practitioners.....

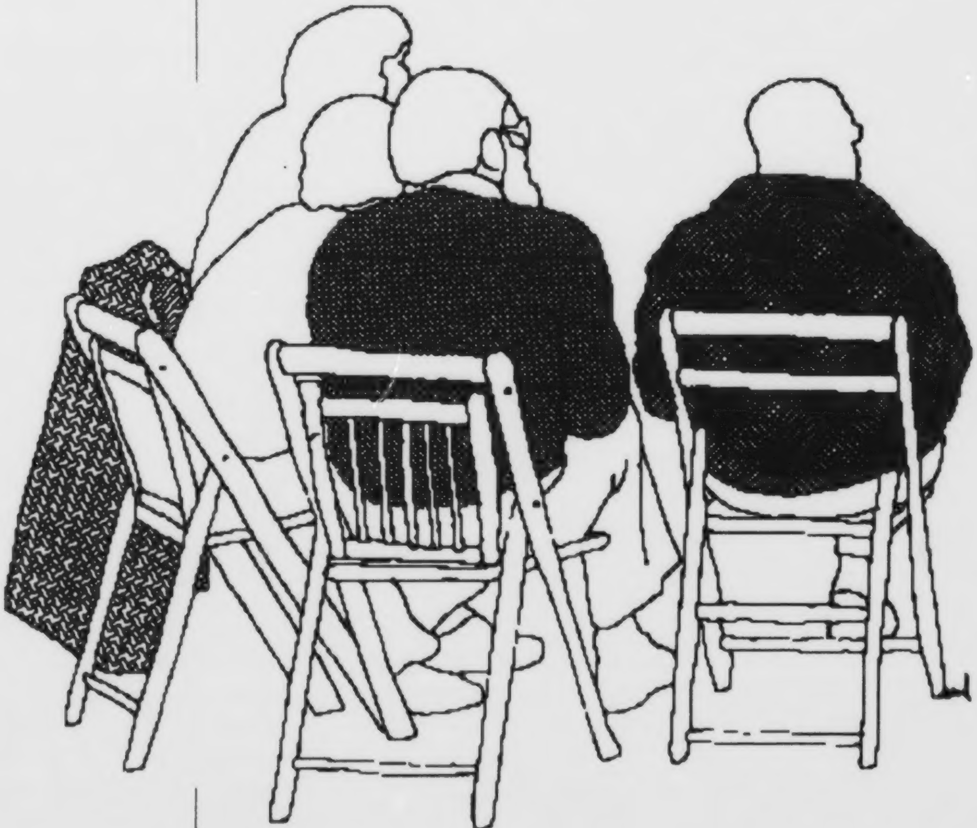
☐ Prepare a public involvement plan for the decision making process, even if the project is small and the mandate for public involvement an informal one.

☐ The shortest document that does the job is the best.

☐ Be sure to build in checkpoints at which you stop to assess the adequacy of your program based on public response.



PHASE 3



CHAPTER 9

IMPLEMENT THE PLAN

PHASE 4

This chapter is very brief, as the manual has already discussed the relevant implementation issues.

As noted earlier in this manual, few decision making processes are as straightforward and linear in practice as they are on paper. No public involvement plan, particularly for controversial decisions, can ever accurately foresee all contingencies. For this reason it is wise to build in review points for evaluating whether revisions to the plan are necessary. Equally important, a public involvement plan is a kind of contract with both the public and other groups in the agency. By defining where the review points are, the process of revising plans is seen as a planned activity, rather than something arbitrary. Others who might want changes made to the plan will then be alerted as to when a plan review is scheduled. Personnel responsible for monitoring should be included in the work schedule.

Public involvement is time consuming and expensive. It should be evaluated for results in the same way that other project components are for costs and benefits. Who conducts the evaluation and what reports are generated should be decided early and included in the work schedule. The evaluation should be carried out by someone not directly involved in the day to day running of the program.

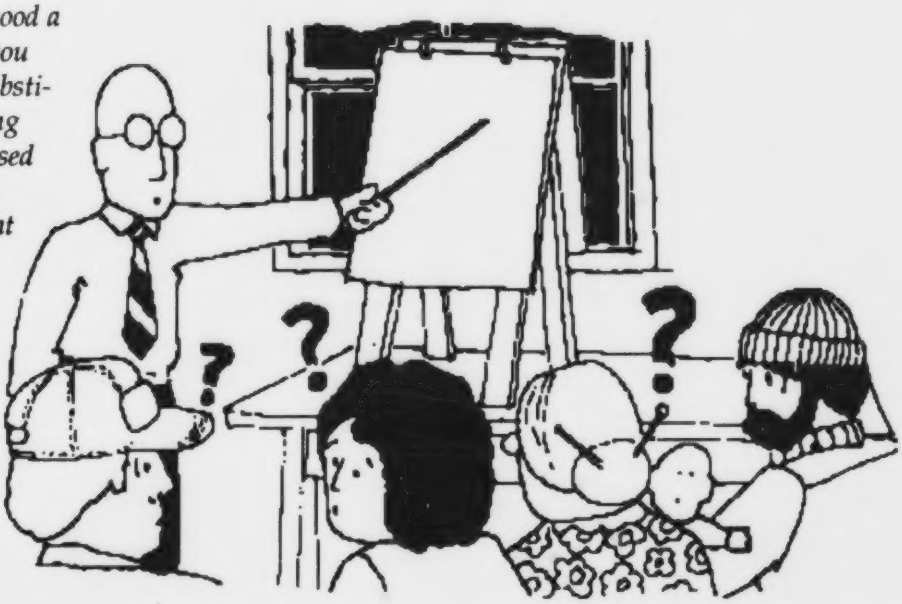
Criteria for judging the effectiveness of a public involvement program are themselves a potential source of controversy. The criteria to be applied must relate to the stated objectives of the public involvement plan and should be able to distinguish between questions relating to the fate of the project and those relating to participant satisfaction with the integrity of the process of involvement.

Sincerity and commitment to the process are conveyed mostly by concrete actions: the speed with which you respond to requests for information; the quality of support services; the courtesy you give all contacts; the evidence of follow-up on recommendations; the completion of homework between meetings; and levelling with people when you have trouble delivering part of your work.

Final Thoughts from the Practitioners.....

☐ Evaluate the program based on what happened, not what was expected.

No matter how good a job of planning you do, there is no substitute for evaluating your program based on what actually happens, not what you expected to happen.



CHAPTER 10

POST DECISION PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLANNING

PHASE 5

Public involvement does not have to stop once "the decision" has been made. Public involvement is needed throughout the decision making process, and all decisions may not have been made at the time of project approval.

If a decision is made not to proceed with a project, it is important to have developed a strategy to inform the public why this decision was made. Too often, the senior decision makers know the reasons for the decision. They see their role in the process as having been completed and move on to other activities. They do not think, or realize, that the public may not have been part of the final decision. The public is left without any follow-up and has no understanding as to why the decision went the way it did. For your sake, you should hope that you are not the next person or agency having to go in and co-ordinate a public involvement program with those people. Cooperation may be limited, to say the least. The moral here is to finish what you started. It will pay dividends if, and when, you have to go back to those publics to work with them in the future.

More importantly, there can be continued involvement in further planning, in implementation, monitoring, mitigation, compensation and evaluation, especially with those aspects of the project that affect that public.

Why bother having continued public involvement? For the same reasons you have early involvement: for ease of implementation, to maintain good relations with the public, and to allow non-crucial decisions to be postponed until after project approval.

Proponents and government regulators on resource development projects often cannot accurately predict all the effects a project will have on a community or region. If the affected community is powerful and organized, it could stop the project from proceeding with the argument that more research is needed, and the project should not be allowed to proceed until the research is complete. This can be very time consuming and often unreasonable, as some impacts cannot be accurately predicted until the project is under way. However, granting approval based only on faith in the proponent can be unreasonable to the community. Post-approval public involvement can be used to deal with this problem; approval can be granted with a provision for continued public involvement. Impacts not identified during the approval phase of the project can be dealt with as they develop.

There is a danger in postponing decision making; this can be used to avoid dealing with serious issues prior to project approval. Therefore, it is vital that decisions on fundamental issues are not postponed.

In addition, a follow-up and appeal mechanism is needed, in case there are legitimate concerns with decisions made after project approval, or in case an issue that appeared to be minor becomes important and the project as a whole needs to be re-examined. There is a need for the manager to have power in this post decision process. There will need to be enforcement mechanisms as well as the ability to return to the regulator or decision making body if an issue cannot be resolved.

You can use a number of mechanisms for public involvement programs such as having public representatives on a project management committee, possibly appointed by a community organization. You can also work directly with interest groups or community leaders, both through informal discussions or other, more formal, means. However, as discussed in previous chapters, be sure all interests are represented or you will find yourself in some difficult situations.

Several key points are noteworthy:

☐ Objectives should be jointly developed by the participants, and be clear, achievable, and appropriate.

☐ The public involvement program must have a possibility of achieving an impact, of changing things.

☐ If all the decisions have already been made, and there is no legitimate room for involvement, then there is no appropriate role for a program and you are, in fact, mis-using the resources available to you.

❑ You must be dealing with real issues, of concern to the public. If this is not the situation, the public will find other ways of achieving their ends.

❑ Project implementation can be a slow and tedious process. You will need commitment from all involved, and an ability to deal with changes in the actors who will be involved. You will need a commitment from everybody to make the process work. Commitment is especially important given potentially long time frames.

❑ New issues or events can arise that can affect the process or change the situation. You will need flexibility to deal with these changes.

❑ Public involvement must have a finite point at which it is to end.

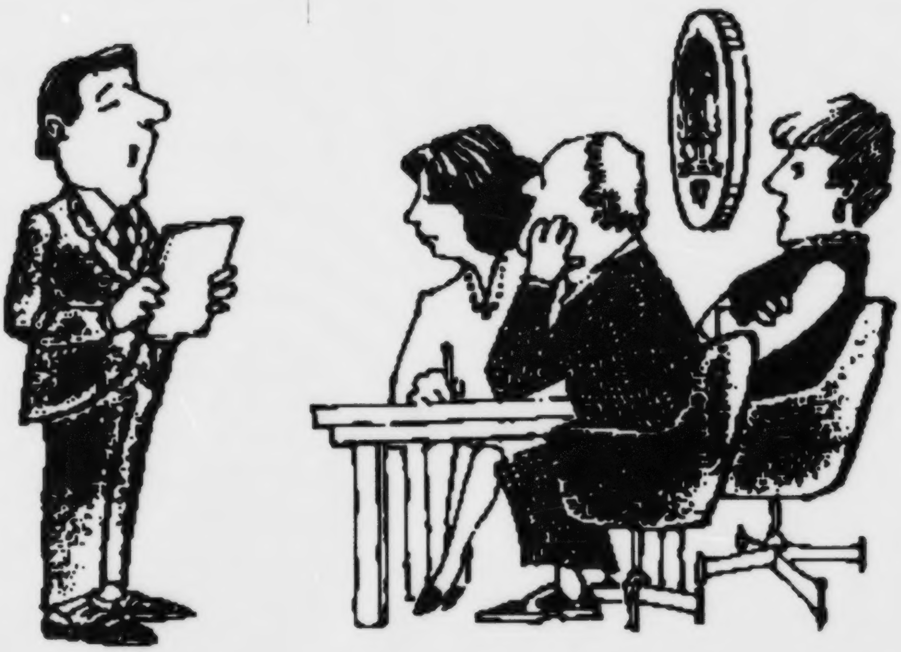
You can specify a lifespan, to end at a set time or when specific goals are reached. The process can be designed to be revived as needed, perhaps when the project is to be shut down. Then you can involve the community in planning for the decommissioning.

❑ Evaluate throughout the process and complete a post assessment when the process is completed.

Final Thoughts from the Practitioners....

☐ Do some form of post-decision public involvement. At the very least, notify the public of the decision made, and let them know how their comments were used in the final decision.

☐ Consider involving the public in implementation, monitoring, mitigation, compensation, and evaluation aspects of the project.



APPENDICES

APPENDIX ONE ISSUES MANAGEMENT

Introduction

The actions of key public and private sector audiences and the media can have untold influence on the ability of a government agency to effectively carry out its mandate. Consequently, responding to key audiences on public policy issues or key projects has become a growing problem for larger (and not so large) government organizations. The challenge is to respond in a way that increases an organizat-ion's chances of affecting the outcome of major issues and in a manner which is consistent with what that organization has said and done previously.

The term "issues management" (or perhaps, "response management") is a systematic way of organizing many actors in a large organization to anticipate, identify, and respond to specific problems, opportunities or public policy issues in a consistent and coordinated manner.

Scope of Issues Management

Issues Management is a boundary spanning function with one eye cast inside the organization, and the other focused outside on events which could affect upon the organization's plans.

A structured program to manage issues places an organization in better control of events; it helps an organization with its vital functions of setting goals and adapting to the socio-political environment. Issues management acts as an early warning system. Instead of reacting as issues arise, the organization is able to select issues of primary importance and plan how best to determine their final resolution. Issues management is a means of helping strategic planners recognize possible changes in the external environment and plan to meet these changes. And for those who work with external audiences on a day to day basis it provides a positions bank regarding what may be, or has been, said on key issues.

Managing issues also performs an integrative function within an organization, and prevents inconsistent policy statements coming from the same organization. As one example, separate committees of a volunteer organization — tax and economics — were on the verge of making different and conflicting representations to government. A structured issues management program would increase the prospect of separate groups working together to debate the issue internally and work out the best position for the organization.

An issues management system also can prevent the kind of situation where an Assistant Deputy Minister drafts a position on an issue to the press, the Minister then makes an announcement and the staff working on the issue read about the decision in the newspaper.

An issues management system should ensure the agency's positions on key issues are updated and available to those who are relating to both internal and external audiences. Issues management involves agency response to an issue as well as planning the communicating with key publics if necessary.

Issues Defined

What exactly are issues" and how do we "manage" them? As might be expected there are many definitions of the term issue — the Issues Management Society, Chase/Jones Issues Management Model, even the legal discipline, all have rather firm notions about what the word "issues" means.

For the purpose of this manual an "issue" is "a problem or an opportunity which potentially involves an external audience and which has the potential to affect the plans of the department or agency".

The Process

Let us look at the actual process of handling issues. The real problem is not just getting an issues management program started but keeping it going, and keeping it valuable to the host organization. There is no foolproof method. We will describe how one "case study" actually works. This is not to be used as the only possible approach; each organization must evolve its own process which is suited to its own particular culture and needs.

There are some basic activities which most issues management systems share.

First, it is essential to produce a document which will be updated regularly. This sounds bureaucratic and unexciting; however, the act of producing a document adds discipline to most processes. Also, it is a fact of life in large organizations that if one wants to be 'listened' to by more than a few, don't say it — write it!

If a document is to be produced, someone must be put in charge of its production and be responsible for attending to all of the events which accompany the process. This could be someone in a corporate planning group, public affairs, or any other group which performs a function that cuts across the operational lines.

The format of the document will depend on the organization. Following is a format which has worked in several commercial corporations.

STEP 1 - Identification of Key Issues (Environmental Scanning)

There is no way to describe a clear-cut, objective method of identifying key issues. The process of identifying issues is as much intuitive as it is objective. The sort of people who are best at this activity are holistic thinkers who, because of their training or special aptitude, have a good sense of the interrelationships in society, and can see the broad picture, not just from the government department's viewpoint, but the greater society's point of view as well. This ability is particularly important in identifying newly emerging issues.

Identifying issues is not just a matter of using one's intuition, however. It is necessary to have good contacts in government and industry, as well as access to public opinion polling data, industrial outlook information, economic forecasts and other relevant data. Other important abilities include understanding the political and economic environment; integrating and synthesizing information and showing its relevance to the organization; familiarity with the wishes of the "Executive" groups; and remaining informed about the organization's plans.

Sometimes the question arises, "How many issues do you identify?" There is no good answer. The great danger is being too exhaustive. Don't concentrate on identifying every issue. If a list is too long or too complicated, no one will read it. Rather than an extensive list, it is preferable to choose the most important ones which could affect the agency's planning and to which it is possible to develop constructive responses.

The person responsible for the initial identification should talk to the line managers to validate or improve the list. This is a vital part in the step of identifying the key issues.

STEP 2 - Issue Groups

The purpose of issue groups is to debate and validate issues, propose departmental positions and identify possible courses of action.

Once a validated list has been developed and a clear notion obtained of how the issues represent problems or opportunities the list is broken into "natural" groupings. Managers who are knowledgeable about particular issues are brought together to consider possible action. It may be wise to have an issue group for macro issues of national importance which have the potential to affect many areas of departmental responsibility. Other issue groups should be formed specifically to focus on a particular issue or a particular region.

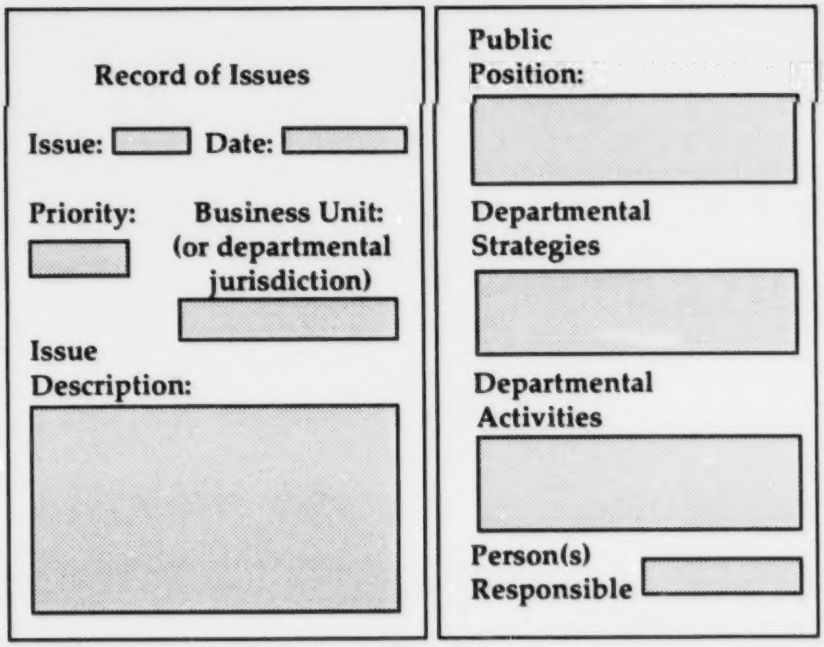
For example, the head of an economic planning group, the Director of Public Affairs, the head financial manager and the chief of development may comprise a group assessing macroeconomic issues. Typically there may be three or four such groups.

Before each group meets, a summary page is prepared and distributed for each issue. The definition of the issues and proposed actions are validated or changed through discussion. The discussion group develops objectives (desired end results for each issue) and tentatively identifies strategies (approaches to be used to achieve the desired end results).

Keeping an issue group going is a dynamic process; groups will change as people change jobs or as issues wax and wane. Consequently, the groups will reflect these changes. It is not a static, mechanical regimen.

The process of meeting with issues groups is not a long one. Typically, it takes two hours or less every quarter for each group, but this is in addition to brief one-on-one conversations which are very critical to the process.

Figure 1
Layout of a Record of Issues


Record of Issues
Issue:
Date:
Priority:
Business Unit: (or departmental jurisdiction)
Issue Description:
Public Position:
Departmental Strategies
Departmental Activities
Person(s) Responsible

STEP 3 - Drafting the Document (Issues Record)

The Document's Format

The finished document will have a range of topics. It lists constellations of issues according to departmental concerns, or in order of priority, if criteria for establishing priorities can be determined.

It is advisable to set a limit of two pages per issue which, for ease of reading, should face each other. The Heading describes the category of issue and its scope — whether it is of national concern which cuts across all agency mandates, or, if it is related only or mostly to unit or geographical location.

After this Heading is the Description. This generally covers the first page; its purpose is to describe the potential impact of the issue on the Department. The Description should clearly identify why the issue is important and the likely consequences if it is not addressed.

The next item contains the Public Position — what to say if called by the media or if speaking publicly. This is generally a condensation of the issue and the end results being sought.

Other headings include:

- ☐ **Objectives** What outcome is desired?
- ☐ **Strategies** How is the agency intended to approach the problem/ opportunity? (High profile, low profile)
- ☐ **Activities** Who will do what and when?
- ☐ **Ownership of the Issue** Who is responsible for taking the lead to ensure everything is completed on time? Who will be up to date on this issue at all times?

STEP 4 - Executive Review

Some organizations find it is appropriate to have the person ultimately responsible for the issues management process undertake a discussion with each senior manager whose area of responsibility is affected by the action plans. If they pro-pose different approaches, these are incorporated. Generally, changes are minimal.

The final draft can be reviewed in detail with the Deputy Minister and modified to reflect his/her input. The Issues Record is then circulated to line managers and other senior personnel. A suitable interval between editions of documents such as the Issues Record is three months, although some organizations prefer monthly up-dates. However, monthly cycles require many meetings and often events do not change that quickly. For those who have quarterly reports, individual pages describing new issues are drafted and circulated.

Conclusion

Most effective systems are simple and clear-cut. The more formal and complicated, the greater the risk of it not surviving. Many organizations have start-ed issues management programs only to see them wither within months. The process described here has been working for several years in at least one organization. The main reason for this is that the organization has a history of being serious about facing the issues and doing something about them. Equally important, the process was not static. It changed to suit the organization's needs and it continues to change. It is essential that each organization develop its own system and help it to evolve within the organization. It is also essential to stay in tune with the external environment.

APPENDIX TWO

DISPLAYING PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT DATA

Following the "completion" of a public involvement program, the team may find itself with literally volumes of material that has been generated. This could include public submissions, minutes of small group and public meetings, or responses from questionnaires. Usually, a dilemma occurs at this time. What materials do the decision-makers need to see to make an informed, intelligent decision? Ideally, this question will have been asked during the public involvement process. Several questions help to determine the extent and type of information required for the decision makers:

❑ How high profile is this issue?
❑ Who will ultimately be making the decision?
❑ How much time will they put aside to review the recommendations and background material?

As an example one public involvement program for Alberta's eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains resulted in the development of a two inch thick document which was sent to the Minister for approval. The Minister sent it back stating that no one in Cabinet would read it and that the program results and recommendations should be summarized in no more than eight to ten pages. No one at Cabinet level has time for reading documents longer than this.

This presents a challenge for the public involvement team. How can they summarize and communicate the most important issues, responses and feelings toward these issues in ten pages? Several key considerations must be addressed in the report/summary to the decision makers.

Title: The title must be clear, succinct and describe the project exactly as the decision-makers have referred to it.

Introduction: A description of the approach taken to the project and the major issues which have been identified.

Stage of Public Involvement: Public involvement activities occur at different stages of a program or project. It must be clear to the decision-makers which stage is being described.

Critical Issue Description: Only issues about decisions which must be made should be included. Issues which have been resolved in the process should not be discussed, although they can be named so that others understand that the topic is being or has been addressed and is not forgotten. Wherever possible similar formats should be used to describe the issues.

Major interest groups must be identified and the size of their organization indicated. Their position regarding each issue must be clearly stated.

Scope of Issue: For each issue, several critical points must be described.

Extent: How widespread is public interest in the issue?

Intensity: What is the level of public interest or awareness in the issue?

Duration: What is the expected duration of the activity and what type of action may be required?

Table 1 outlines the categories which have been developed in each of these areas.

Finally, it is essential to make an overall evaluation of the issue. How critical is each issue area for each of the interest groups; therefore how important is a response from the decision makers? One method to evaluate has been displayed in Table 2.

An example of one display developed can be found in Figures 1 and 2. As these figures illustrate, each particular issue must be displayed in no more than two pages. Again, this is essential. The two figures describe each area in terms of its importance and the type of information contained.

If the staff have incorporated this process from the initiation of a public involvement program, many of the organizational methods outlined here can be used in the data collection and analysis stages. This may provide a framework which reduces the time requirements for the overall program.

Table 1

Categories to Describe Issues

EXTENT OF ISSUE - How widespread is public interest in the issue?

LOCAL	the question involves people living in the particular community or rural area
AREA	the question involves people living in one area of the region
REGION	the question involved people living throughout the entire region

INTENSITY - What is the level of public interest or awareness of the issue?

EMERGING	The issue is in the early stage of development. The issue has received relatively little attention, except from a small segment of the population. The widest range of options are open to the planners and residents to address the issue.
EXISTING	The issue is in an advanced stage of development with a high level of public awareness. Fewer options are open to the planners and residents.
PUBLIC CONCERN	The issue is receiving an extreme level of public awareness and public reaction is beginning to occur. Very few options are now open to the planners and residents.

DURATION - What type of action should the issue receive?

IMMEDIATE	opportunity may be limited and requires immediate attention
SHORT TERM	opportunities are greater and can be dealt with in a 1-2 year time frame
LONG TERM	multiple opportunities to address the issue in long range planning of 2-5 years

Table 2

Categories for Evaluating the Overall Issue

EVALUATION - How critical are the issues to each user group to the decision maker?

Minimal Concern	the issue is of less importance to the particular user group and the planning may be long term
Important Issue	the issue may be becoming disruptive but may still be intermediate or long term in the plan ning horizon
Critical-Response	all indicators are critical and action is absolutely essential

Figure 1

Sample of Issue Display

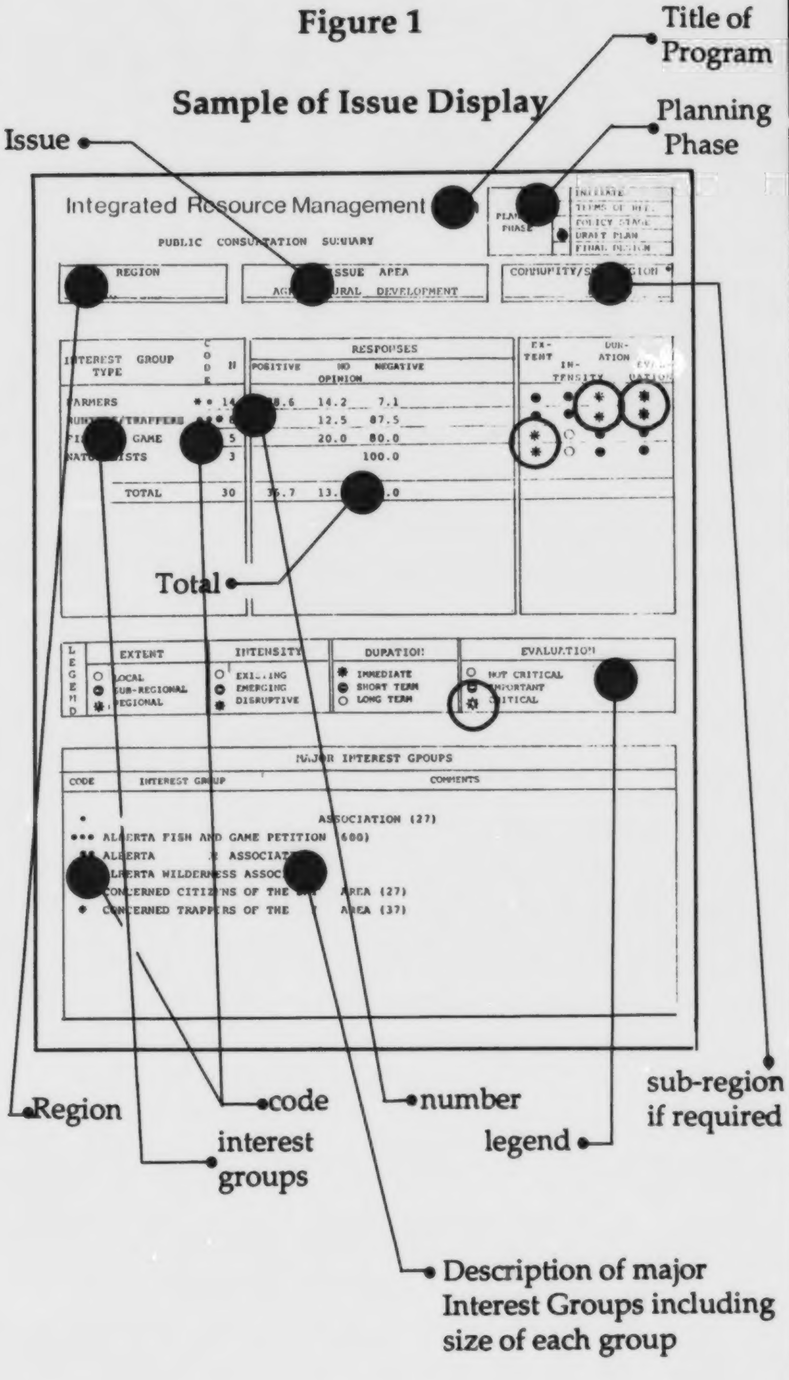
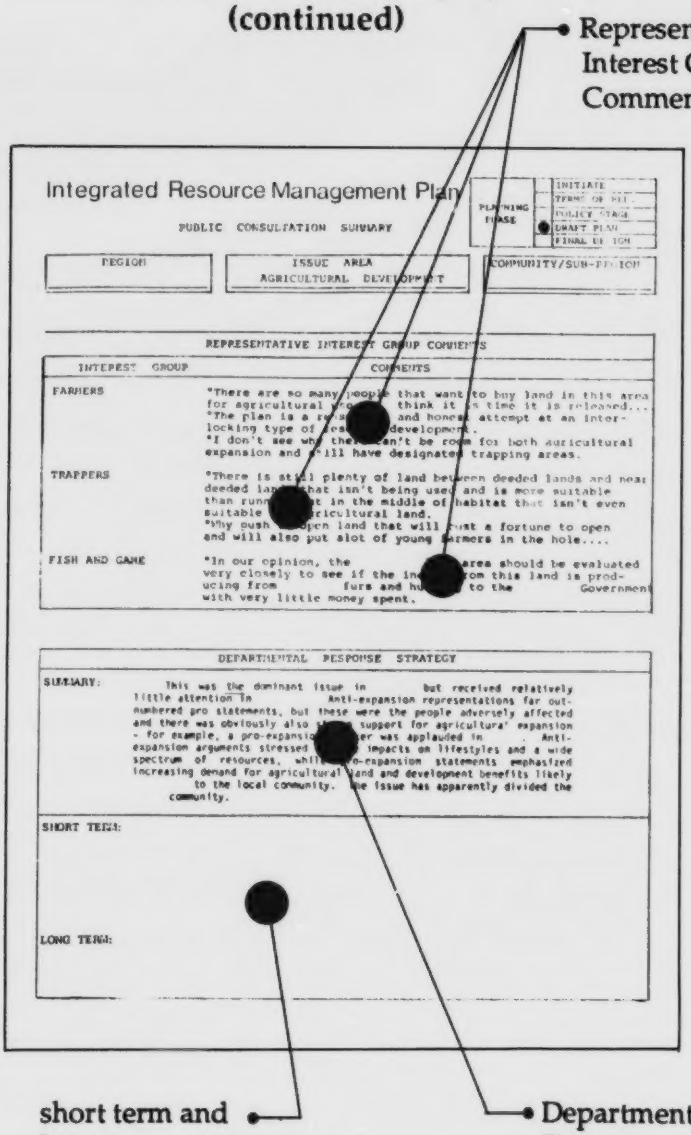

Title of Program
Planning Phase
Issue
Integrated Resource Management
PUBLIC CONSULTATION SUMMARY
PLANNING PHASE
INITIATE
TERMS OF REF.
POLICY STAGE
DRAFT PLAN
FINAL DESIGN
REGION
ISSUE AREA
AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT
COMMUNITY/SUB-REGION
INTEREST GROUP TYPE
CODE
N
RESPONSES
POSITIVE
NO OPINION
NEGATIVE
EXTENT
INTENSITY
DURATION
EVALUATION
FARMERS
FISH AND GAME
NATURALISTS
TOTAL
14
5
3
30
14.2
7.1
12.5
87.5
20.0
80.0
100.0
Total
LEGEND
EXTENT
LOCAL
SUB-REGIONAL
REGIONAL
INTENSITY
EXISTING
EMERGING
DISRUPTIVE
DURATION
IMMEDIATE
SHORT TERM
LONG TERM
EVALUATION
NOT CRITICAL
IMPORTANT
CRITICAL
MAJOR INTEREST GROUPS
CODE
INTEREST GROUP
COMMENTS
ASSOCIATION (27)
ALBERTA FISH AND GAME PETITION (600)
ALBERTA ASSOCIATION
ALBERTA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION
CONCERNED CITIZENS OF THE AREA (27)
CONCERNED TRAPPERS OF THE AREA (37)
Region
code
number
sub-region if required
interest groups
legend
Description of major Interest Groups including size of each group

Figure 1

Sample of Issue Display (continued)



Representative Interest Group Comments

Integrated Resource Management Plan

PUBLIC CONSULTATION SUMMARY

PLANNING PHASE		
		INITIATE
		TERMS OF REF.
		POLICY STAGE
	●	DRAFT PLAN
		FINAL DECISION

REGION	ISSUE AREA	COMMUNITY/SUB-REGION
	AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT	

REPRESENTATIVE INTEREST GROUP COMMENTS

INTEREST GROUP	COMMENTS
FARMERS	"There are so many people that want to buy land in this area for agricultural pro[illegible] think it is time it is released... "The plan is a re[illegible] and honest attempt at an interlocking type of [illegible] development. "I don't see why ther[illegible] can't be room for both agricultural expansion and [illegible]ill have designated trapping areas.
TRAPPERS	"There is still plenty of land between deeded lands and near deeded lan[illegible] that isn't being used and is more suitable than runn[illegible] in the middle of habitat that isn't even suitable [illegible]ricultural land. "Why push [illegible] open land that will cost a fortune to open and will also put alot of young farmers in the hole....
FISH AND GAME	"In our opinion, the [illegible] area should be evaluated very closely to see if the in[illegible]om this land is producing from furs and hu[illegible] to the Government with very little money spent.

DEPARTMENTAL RESPONSE STRATEGY

SUMMARY: This was the dominant issue in but received relatively little attention in Anti-expansion representations far outnumbered pro statements, but these were the people adversely affected and there was obviously also st[illegible] support for agricultura' expansion - for example, a pro-expansio[illegible]er was applauded in . Anti-expansion arguments stressed [illegible] impacts on lifestyles and a wide spectrum of resources, whil[illegible]ro-expansion statements emphasized increasing demand for agricultural land and development benefits likely to the local community. [illegible]he issue has apparently divided the community.

SHORT TERM:

LONG TERM:

short term and long term responses

Departmental Response Strategy

APPENDIX THREE

CASE STUDIES

1. Alberta Special Waste Treatment Centre
2. Mingan Archipelago National Park Reserve
3. Canadian Superior Oil - Hinton Sour Gas Well
4. Fraser River Estuary Management Program
5. National Consultation Program - Environmental Protection Act and Management of Chemicals
6. Calgary Area Aviation Master Plan
7. Bruce Peninsula National Park
8. Fort McKay Interface Committee
9. Fraser Thompson Corridor Review
10. Sand Disposal Near Steveston
11. Pest Management in Plantations: A Consultative Approach

1. Alberta Special Waste Treatment Centre - Swan Hills, Alberta

Alberta Special Waste Treatment Centre - Swan Hills, Alberta

The following is abridged from an article which appeared in the Spring 1987 issue of Collections, a publication of the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation. This article outlines the background and history to the development of the waste treatment facility.

Siting a First: A Look at How Alberta Succeeded

An advertisement in Alberta newspapers one June morning in 1984 was too incredible to believe. In the ad, Town of Ryley residents criticized the Provincial Government for not putting a special waste treatment plant in their backyard. They were upset that Swan Hills had won out.

The ad brought home an amazing reality; that Alberta had succeeded where every other government authority in North America had failed. Not only was Alberta the only province or state in North America to successfully site a plant, but actually had two communities competing for it. Everywhere else authorities were struggling to get past first base, the not in my backyard syndrome (NIMBY).

The ad was also clear evidence of why the Province had succeeded, because the people, not the government, had taken it into their hands to solve the problem of where to put a hazardous waste plant.

Dr. Walter Harris, a member of the Hazardous Waste Management Committee that started the whole process, told an environmental engineering group in Toronto that Alberta had been successful: "Because we recognized right from the start that it was a social, psychological, political problem, and not a technical one."

The consequences of choosing a site without public consideration became evident in Fort Saskatchewan in September 1979. Kinetic Contaminants of Canada Ltd. chose Fort Saskatchewan but angry residents overwhelmingly rejected it. The same kind of thing happened in Two Hills, a town 120 kilometres east.

The province then placed a moratorium on the construction of hazardous waste treatment facilities and set up a Hazardous Waste Management Committee to study the issue.

It took only four months of intensive work for the committee to issue its report: Hazardous Waste Management in Alberta. In that time they had listened to industry, government and interest group presentations, gone on a fact-finding tour to West Germany and commissioned three studies.

Key recommendations pointed to the need for:

- an integrated system to treat special wastes
- waste management facilities regulated and operated by the province
- the need for the participation of industry, other levels of government and Albertans in seeking the solution to the problem.

The public speaks

The province asked the Environment Council of Alberta (ECA) to hold information meetings and hearings across the province. More than 1,000 people attended in 16 locations and submitted 175 briefs. Based on information gathered, the ECA recommended umbrella legislation to regulate all chemicals released to the environment, including hazardous wastes, and the establishment of two consolidated treatment plants to be operated by an Alberta Crown Corporation. In its 1981 report it also called for the Minister of Environment to establish a site selection committee as soon as possible to seek out locations for treatment plants.

The Hazardous Waste Implementation Team was composed of private citizens from diverse backgrounds. Their mission was to initiate a suitable siting process that would take into consideration both technical and public acceptability criteria. To ensure public involvement, they were to sponsor extensive, frank and open discussions. To ensure an environmentally responsible approach, they were also to study the requirements of a hazardous waste system.

By the time the team was formed its support group had established siting criteria. The process, known as "constraint mapping", basically eliminated unsuitable areas of the province using physical, biological, land use or human criteria. A series of maps illustrating constraint areas province-wide was juxtaposed to show all constraints and reveal any "constraint-free areas" where a plant could be located.

Using this information the Task Force was ready to initiate its "by invitation only" public involvement program. That meant the group would not approach any community unless invited by local government or the public.

The "roadshow," as it came to be known, travelled to 65 communities. Team and Task Force members explained the constraint mapping process, showed slide-tape presentations on hazardous wastes, held open discussions on concerns, recorded those concerns and facilitated the formation of a local action committee and the nomination of a delegate to attend an October workshop.

Through information sessions conducted under the Team at first, and then under an Advisory Group when the Team disbanded in December, 1981, the province was able to educate and inform a broad base of Albertans as well as work toward the siting of a plant.

At the Provincial Workshop in October, 1981, the Team and Task Force had an excellent opportunity for intensive interaction with interested Albertans. For two days candidates, selected by residents from across the province, identified and shared concerns. Team or Alberta Environment members were called in, on the request of delegates, to probe into concern areas.

Dr. Harris calls it the single, most important activity in the entire program. "Because there was no hard sell these people worked very hard at identifying with and understanding the problem, and the majority went home convinced something had to be done and supported the province's efforts."

The final report of the Team (all private citizens) suggested the facility be privately owned and operated, but that the system be managed by a Crown corporation or agency and that the facility be located on Crown land. They recommended Alberta Environment select a suitable private sector operator and develop a short list of sites.

As a result of the public participation efforts some 52 written requests for regional assessments were received. Many municipalities felt the resultant map would be useful for such things as the location of potential landfill sites. Most never went beyond this step due to lack of interest or because there was no constraint-free land shown in the assessment.

Some locations requested further, more detailed assessments, and by the fall of 1981 exploratory drilling had taken place in Beaver, Provost and Flagstaff Counties, yielding several potential sites for more detailed hydrogeologic investigation. But local public opposition disqualified Flagstaff and another municipality just outside Edmonton, Strathcona County.

Program Redirected

That left only Beaver County in the running. The Task Force's experience there caused it to reshape its program. President Mick recalls, "As the information meetings progressed and the opposition mounted, it became clear we had underestimated the kind of opposition which siting a hazardous waste plant can elicit. The April plebiscite, which overwhelmingly rejected a plant there, reminded us about the sleeping giant." After Beaver County the Task Force re-examined its techniques and revamped its meeting format. Public meetings were made smaller to discourage "shouters" from overtaking meetings and the format became more structured, taking a lower key, more educational approach. "After each person spoke on their specialty they would take questions or comments. That way public input was focussed," explains Dr. Harris.

Another important change was to acknowledge the negative as well as the positive aspects of the issue and present a variety of viewpoints. Films on hazardous waste disasters, like Love Canal, were shown and more attention was addressed to establishing rapport.

The new program was launched in the towns of Ryley and Swan Hills and in the southeastern portion of Alberta, and met with great success. Plebiscites were held in all three locations which saw public acceptance in Ryley and Swan Hills. Hydrogeological investigations for both areas confirmed these as sites to be considered.

Swan Hills Named

In March, 1984, one year after the hydrogeological reports were completed, Cabinet named a location near Swan Hills as the site for the special waste facility. For the first time in North America a community had actually asked a government authority to build a hazardous waste treatment facility in their backyard.

2. Mingan Archipelago National Park Reserve, Quebec

Background

Under Environment Canada, Parks policy, public consultation is described as "an essential part of the management planning process" for a park. The public is to be involved from the early stages in key decisions including preparation of park objectives, formulation of alternative park concepts, selection of a final park management plan, and amendments to the plan. In those national parks where a tradition exists for developments or use inconsistent with parks objectives, public consultation is required before any decisions are made as to the future of such uses.

Process

The Mingan Archipelago National Park planning process is a good example of the approach employed by the agency, including release of information bulletins, information meetings and open houses, receipt and analysis of public comments and establishment of working committees to resolve certain issues particular to the park, such as the use of the park lands by squatters, local hunters, and the Montagnais Indians. Consultation was provided in two parts. The first, very general, aimed at obtaining public opinion on the role of the park. This information permitted identification of problems or possible impacts on the population, and the design of a management plan. The second part focussed on the management plan.

Results

Because of the land claims process of the native peoples the Park has not yet been definitely established, but it is termed a National Park Reserve.

3. Canadian Superior Oil Ltd. Public Involvement Program Respecting A Sour Gas Well near Hinton, Alberta

Background

In early 1985 Canadian Superior Oil Ltd. (CSO) decided it wished to drill an exploratory well about 5 kilometres from Hinton to test a possible sour gas prospect. The company recognized that there would likely be serious public concerns about the proposal because of the major sour gas blowout that occurred at a drilling well in 1982 in the same general area. It decided, therefore, to conduct a carefully designed community relations program and engaged the services of a consultant specializing in community relations.

Early in the process the company established a set of guidelines or principles that became the basis for future decisions and guided it throughout the initial four month period of community contacts. It was also decided to commence the community relations process well before filing an application with Alberta's Energy Resources Conservation Board (ERCB), the body which must approve the drilling program.

Some of the more important principles were:

- direct contact with the community would be conducted through a few individuals;
- CSO staff would have a high profile and leadership role in all community contacts;
- records of all contacts would be maintained and circulated to all CSO staff having a role in the application process;
- Hinton community members would receive clear written information regarding the well and its risks and benefits;
- CSO would answer all questions directly, honestly and quickly; and
- CSO would not speak for any government department or the ERCB, and would direct any questions to the appropriate group.

Process

The community relations program commenced with the consultant meeting community officials to determine their preferred way of being dealt with. He advised that CSO begin the community contact process through the Town Council and from there move to other Hinton and area individuals and groups. Prior to applying for the permit, the public involvement program extended over a four month period.

Techniques

Main elements of the PI program were:

2. Mingan Archipelago National Park Reserve, Quebec

3. Canadian Superior Oil Ltd. Public Involvement Program Respecting A Sour Gas Well near Hinton, Alberta

❑ preparation of an information pamphlet,
❑ meetings with:
  - Town Council
  - Emergency Response Planning authorities
  - all families within 12 km of the proposed well
  - organizations such as Fish and Game and Chamber of Commerce
  - government departments and agencies
  - medical and hospital officials
  - high school students
❑ special meetings
  - open houses for the public
  - general public meeting with invitation sent by mail to all residents of the area
❑ participation in the annual Hinton Trade Fair
❑ recording all questions raised at meetings, providing written answers and making the information available to all parties.

Results

As a result of this process, including detailed, last minute negotiations, all parties reached an agreement. All opposition to the well was withdrawn and the public hearing was cancelled. The Company proceeded with its drilling program and continued the public involvement program throughout the drilling activity.

The public involvement program for the proposed critical sour gas well was both thorough and sophisticated. It dealt with matters that were of concern to the public and had the potential of becoming major issues for the applicant, the ERCB and government departments. The process provided a win/win conclusion. The emergency response plan develop for the Hinton well has been applied to other cases. The well was drilled without incident and is currently capped as a potential well.

4. Fraser River Estuary Management Program, Lower Mainland, British Columbia

Background

The Fraser River Estuary Management Program (FREMP) was established in October 1985 through a five year Agreement among Environment Canada, B.C. Ministry of Environment, Fisheries and Oceans, the Fraser River Harbour Commission and the North Fraser Harbour Commission. The Program developed from the two-phase Fraser River Estuary Study which began in 1977 and was defined in more detail in an implementation strategy published in 1984. There was an extensive public involvement program connected with the study.

The estuary management program consists of three components - a series of goals and policies to guide planning and decision-making; a management committee to deal with issues; and program activities to improve estuary management.

Management

The management structure consists of a Management Committee with a five member executive consisting of the signatories to the Agreement and 27 members at large: 3 federal agencies, 3 provincial ministries, 3 regional districts, 12 local municipalities and 6 Indian bands.

The decision environment called for a strong public involvement program for two main reasons: the considerable public interest developed through the public program associated with the initial study phase; and the need for public input as an essential element in planning for conservation and recreation facilities and services. Given this background and the policies of public involvement of several of the signatory agencies, whether or not to involve the public was hardly a question. Public involvement plays a substantial part in decision-making, since FREMP has a mainly co-ordinating function among the main jurisdictions and interests.

Process

Objectives - One of the five management principles published in the first FREMP newsletter in March 1985 is: "To develop trust and consensus by ensuring broad consultation between all participating agencies, providing avenues for public consultation and maintaining program flexibility." A further objective of the public program is to increase awareness and knowledge about the estuary and the management program.

Approach - FREMP has promoted a consultation process from the outset, making this a featured section of its first newsletter under the caption: "Public Consultation Promoted". The first newsletter concludes: "The FREMP public consultation effort builds awareness and understanding of the issues affecting the management of the Fraser River estuary and offers the public an opportunity to interact with management agencies and influence their decisions".

A major principle underlying the public program is that of shared responsibility. The program will take the initiative to foster awareness and information about the estuary and the program and will be readily accessible to everyone interested. However, citizens and their public interest groups must take responsibility to monitor FREMP and take some initiative to seek further information and present their views. FREMP does not send all its information to every resident of the estuary, but does ensure there are ample windows for those interested to become informed and to be heard.

Techniques

- ☐ store front office
- ☐ "central project registry" - accessible to public in office and via computer/modem
- ☐ newsletter, annual report, and information booklets - eg. anagency guide
- ☐ open house
- ☐ participation in conference
- ☐ talks/speeches to other organizations
- ☐ management committee accessible to individuals/organizations

Effectiveness of Techniques

The store-front office has a steady flow of calls and visitors from its various publics — municipalities, companies, interest groups and

4. Fraser River Estuary Management Program, Lower Mainland, British Columbia

individuals.

The registry works well, and will soon be even more accessible. It is particularly valuable in "letting the public look over our shoulder."

The conference was especially helpful, even though somewhat critical, as it enabled people to talk to the senior managers of the program and increase their personal awareness of issues.

Participants in working groups are a real asset to specific FREMP projects.

The other techniques — agency guide, newsletter, open houses, displays and talks to groups — are all supplementary means of increasing awareness and information about the estuary and the program; each works well with its particular segment of the public.

Results

Positive working relationships have been successfully developed with most public interest groups and other organizations, and awareness and interest in the general public is growing.

5. National Consultation Program: Canadian Environmental Protection Act and Management of Chemicals

In March of 1987 a national consultation meeting was held with various stakeholder groups to develop concensus on the direction for a new Environmental Protection Act. A concensus building approach was employed which had previously been effectively used on a task force of industry, government, labour, environmental groups and consumers to develop a management approach to chemicals (September 1986). The following extract is taken from the background paper developed for the March 1987 meetings on the Environmental Protection Act.

Consultation Principles and Protocols
(Background Paper for National Consultation Meeting, Environmental Protection Act, March 1987)

Consultation is the method of working with key parties with an interest in an issue, with those who can support a particular course of action, influence it, implement it or oppose it. The emphasis on consultation is based on the belief that:

a) open dialogue leads to the development of quality decisions that are understandable and acceptable to affected parties;
b) time spent on the developmental stages of a project will reduce the time, cost, delays and disagreements at the implementation stage; and
c) good consultation relationships support more rapid and effective cooperative responses to urgent situations.

To be effective, this requires the mobilization of all interests in society who have a stake in the issue at hand. The growing linkage between environmental and economic interests is coming to grips with achieving a modern industrial base leading simultaneously to industrial competitive advantage, environmental and health protection, and employment opportunities. No one sector of society has the total skills and resources to achieve this objective. Ongoing consultations among the various interests are vital in order to identify opportunities for moving towards the overall objective.

Consultation allows all interested parties to obtain all relevant information, evaluate available options and related consequences and provide objectively based perspectives to each participant's decision-making. The challenge is to create new mechanisms of active, focussed cooperation among interested parties leading to an effective and credible range of actions.

Governments hold special status in consultations as they are often the decision-makers. This need not conflict with government working cooperatively with other interested parties as long as any special constraints are acknowledged early in the process. Indeed, it should be recognized that all interested parties operate within specific "political" decision-making processes. Principles and protocols for consultation are needed to protect the integrity of all parties.

5. National Consultation Program: Canadian Environmental Protection Act and Management of Chemicals

In June 1985, under the leadership of the Niagara Institute, Environment Canada and its major clients/stakeholders developed a set of principles and protocols for consultations. These have been used in the design of a number of major consultations over the last two years including:

- the Task Force on the Management of Chemicals that produced the report "From Cradle to Grave: A Management Approach to Chemicals";
- the Environmental Contaminants Act Amendments Consultative Committee that produced the "Final Report of the Environmental Contaminants Act Amendments Consultative Committee";
- the Western and Northern Region Consultations on Toxic Chemicals at Banff in 1985-86;
- The State of the Environment Consultation; and
- the consultation on the Draft Environmental Protection Act.

The principles and protocols were also the focus of two workshops at the Environment Canada National Consultation Meeting in November, 1985.

A proposed code of conduct for consultations is outlined in the following section. The principles and protocols are derived from the original Niagara Process and contain additional input from the other consultation sessions. They deal with how the process of consultation should be structured, the manner in which interested parties participate, questions of resources, access to data, timing and consensus-building.

Principles of Consultation

1. There must be the capacity in Canadian society for those affected by actions of one segment or interest to have the opportunity to be informed and participate in the decisions.
2. There must be real and regular consultation involving all the interested parties who are affected by an issue or its resolution.
3. There must be a shift from confrontational approaches to a broadly based process of collaboration where interested parties, by working

together, define and build on common ground.

4. There must be recognition that all participants have important contributions to make and these must be actively solicited.
5. There must be access for all participants to a common information base on which to set priorities and to make decisions.
6. There must be the capacity for joint development of plans of action, including assessing performance, which respond to the needs of all interested parties.
7. There must be the recognition from all participants of the unique contribution of each participant, and this may necessitate the sharing of resources.
8. There must be regular contact maintained by participants in any consultation process with the "constituency" they represent.
9. There must be a variety of mechanisms for consultation, able to come to grips with different situations, and with sufficient stability to permit longer planning horizons by all stakeholders.

Protocols of Consultation

Process and Participants

1. Consultations may be initiated by any participant affected by an issue.
2. There should be, wherever possible, prior consultation on the process itself.
3. Consultations require at the outset a clear statement of the issue to be addressed, objectives for the consultation and any constraints on the consultation. These should be clearly set forth and recognized by all participants in advance.
4. Consultations should be tailored to the specific objective of the exercise and the mandate and role and responsibilities of the stakeholders involved.
5. There should be an absence of pre-determined, non-negotiable solutions.
6. When the results of consultations require legislative implementation, participants should clearly understand how their efforts will fit into any existing regulatory or legislative process.
7. Consultations must accommodate representatives of all the interests directly affected by an issue and its resolution.
8. Consultations must recognize and accommodate all participants' interests, either by improving decisions affecting them or by explaining the rationale underlying the decisions.
9. Participants should be consulted at an early stage in the process while options are still open.
10. Participants must clearly understand and present the positions of the interests they represent.
11. Participants must be committed to seeking, as far as possible, the constructive integration of all viewpoints, not simply the advocacy of narrow interests.

Etiquette

12. Consultations must be motivated by genuine desire and commitment to obtain and consider the views received.
13. There must be mutual respect for the legitimacy and point of view of all participants.
14. Consultation must be focussed at a meaningful level, deal with real

issues, and justify itself by concrete results and real value to participants.
15. The consultation process must be viewed as ongoing, as tangible evidence of mutuality and interdependence of stakeholder interests.
16. The process must enhance the building of trust among participants, including clarifying values, building a common information base, developing norms for cooperation and applying these to specific problems.

Resources, Data and Timing

17. Consultation processes require adequate commitment of time and resources from the outset.
18. The time frame for consultation must seek a balance between the time constraints on all parties.
19. All parties must have reasonable access to all relevant information, on a timely basis.
20. Emergency situations lack the luxury of time, but it should be recognized that a strong on-going consultation effort will ensure a cooperative base for responses when emergency situations do arise.

Consensus Building

21. Consultations should seek common ground and build on it.
22. Solutions should be developed through consensus where all stakeholders have equal opportunity to present their views and be heard in the context of the consensus building process.
23. Consensus building requires compromise and flexibility from all participants; a strong consensus implies that participants have rallied to the best possible solution within a wide range of constraints and aspirations.
24. Participants expect feedback from other participants clearly explaining the basis for any decisions which are taken.

The use of these principles and protocols was effectively demonstrated in the process respecting the management of chemicals. A task force representing large chemical manufacturing companies and industry associations, national and provincial environmental groups, federal and provincial governments and labour and consumer groups developed a "cradle-to-grave" approach to managing chemicals through a consultative process.

The consultative process lasted over six months, and was characterized by:

-Fifteen members on the task force, each representing his/her own stakeholder constituency and committed to exploring areas of agreement/disagreement, transmitting the concerns of their constituency in their Task Force meetings and in turn communicating back with the constituency.

-A neutral facilitator (the Niagara Institute) and the recording of proceedings by the same agency.

-Meetings in both plenary and smaller working groups.

-Presentation of background papers from constituency organizations.

-Use of brainstorming and creative writing techniques.

-Considerable time devoted by individual members to communicating with their own constituencies.

Results

The Steering Committee met monthly, held three major workshops, and sponsored four task forces which had an average of four meetings each, and produced a set of task force recommendations approved in the final plenary meeting. The process produced concensus on measures for improving consultation processes and for application of those processes to a number of high priority issues in a manner likely to achieve both environmental and economic objectives. While the project contract was officially terminated with the final plenary meeting, two new task forces were created which will be carried on as separate projects, and various stakeholder groups have initiated other formal and informal activities consistent with the project's recommendations.

6. Calgary Area Aviation Master Plan, Calgary, Alberta

Background

The primary objective of the Calgary Area Aviation Master Plan (CAAMP) was to analyze the needs of the system and recommend how to meet its long term requirements. Key problems identified were: runway deficiencies, too broad an aircraft mix, neighbourhood noise impacts, and costs.

The Calgary International Airport had been experiencing rapid growth in aircraft traffic; relationships between airlines and airport tenants with airport management had become strained through a number of specific operational concerns.

Management

While strictly advisory in nature, public consultation was an integral part of this planning process. The main public consultation program was designed in November 1984 and implemented during the spring of 1985.

Process

The two primary objectives of the process were:

❑ to enable organizational representatives to become more informed about the airport situation, the issues, the needs of the various parties, alternative solutions available and the criteria for selecting among them.

❑ to enable the participants to work with each other and with Transport Canada to develop a technically sound and economically attractive solution (including the accommodation of general aviation aircraft) which would be generally understood and accepted by most of those affected by it so that the needs of the larger community could be met.

6. Calgary Area Aviation Master Plan, Calgary, Alberta

Techniques

-initial informal meetings to identify interests, perspectives
-social profile of the City of Calgary and the area's aviation community
-series of planning workshops with about 20 participants each, each with a different purpose related to the planning process

Effectiveness of Techniques

The social profile provided the essential data base on which to plan and manage the workshops; its necessary frankness about airport-community relations generated some initial static.

The workshops were rated favorably by both TC and other participants. The achievement of concensus on a final recommendation was a tribute to the hard work and commitment of the various parties; it was also unexpected and unnecessary. While concensus is ideal, workable compromises which have the informed and visible support of a substantial majority of the participants will usually suffice.

The minutes of the meetings were detailed and highly technical, but they were an essential part of the process, not only for use by the participants but so the participants could consult with their colleagues, such as executive members of organizations.

The summary statement distributed by most organizations to their members avoided a variety of interpretations about what was done and the final recommendation.

Results

The working relationship between the various parties improved and should contribute to ongoing operating activities.

The group reached a concensus agreement on a strategy to recommend, and this recommendation was later approved by the executives of the organizations involved.

7. Bruce Peninsula National Park, Ontario

7. Bruce Peninsula National Park, Ontario

Background

In 1981, the northern Bruce Peninsula in Ontario was identified and selected by Environment Canada, Parks as a natural area of Canadian significance and a potential national park area. In September 1981 the federal agency began a process of publicly examining the feasibility of establishing a national park on the Bruce Peninsula.

Process

In the following two years, Environment Canada, Parks carried out a public consultation program in the affected townships which resulted in a "well informed and exceptionally well-represented public". By 1984 the following had taken place:

- establishment of a store-front office

- mailing of an information package to each ratepayer
- establishment of a joint committee with representatives from the two townships to determine the views of local residents
- continued mailouts to residents
- twelve open houses

Results

The final agreement with the Ontario Government to create the national park was signed in 1987.

8. Fort McKay Interface Committee, Alberta

The Fort McKay Interface Committee was formed at the initiative of Alberta's energy industry regulatory agency, the ERCB (Energy Resources Conservation Board). The purpose of the committee was to improve communication among industry, government and community officials with respect to oil sands activities, environmental and community development issues in Fort McKay, a primarily native community.

1984 Application by Syncrude

In 1984 syncrude applied to the ERCB for approval to increase the capacity of its plant at Fort McKay, Alberta. Because of opposition from the community of Fort McKay, the ERCB convened a public hearing. The hearing was extremely adversarial. The Fort McKay Band contended that oil sands operations were having terrible effects on the community — their lifestyle had been destroyed and their health was in jeopardy. The applicant contended that actual impacts were minimal and well within reasonable standards as demonstrated by extensive research programs.

The ERCB granted the application, but was concerned about the major differences in views between the Band and the oil sands operators. It decided that special efforts should be made to find the true facts and correct any outstanding problems. It believed that inadequate communication between the parties was a major cause of the problems and that an effective public involvement program should be implemented as soon as possible.

Public Involvement Program

The ERCB believed that the most effective PI program would be the establishment of a community/industry/government committee. Because of the sensitivity of the issues and the divisiveness of previous media exchanges, the ERCB decided it would only be successful if it had the support of senior officers for each of the parties. Therefore, support was sought from the Chief of the Band, the Presidents of the two companies and the Deputy Minsters of affected government departments. All supported the approach and agreed to appoint senior representatives to the founding committee. An independent chairman was appointed, and the Band was provided with funding for an expert in environmental matters and a solicitor

At the first meeting of the committee, in September 1985, the Band proposed agenda items that were almost all socio-economic matters rather than the environmental/health issues that had been the impetus for the Committee. However, the issues were clearly of major concern to the community and Committee members accepted them. Because the representatives from industry and government had responsible positions and substantial authority they were able to provide both advice and assistance in dealing with the specific issues being discussed.

Socio-economic issues included the installation of water supply and sewage systems for Fort McKay, as well as the construction of a multi-use community centre. Environmental issues were added to the agenda, and a Community Environmental Education Committee was established, funded by the two oil sands companies. Other activities in the area are being addressed, including reclamation of mined areas and community environmental education.

Syncrude's Application for a New Mining Area

When Syncrude applied to the ERCB for a new 25-year mining area in October 1985, careful consideration was given to how the application should be reviewed. The Interface Committee meetings had been initiated only a few weeks previously and the ERCB was concerned that its normal review process would result in an adversarial hearing which could jeopardize the new co-operative approach. Therefore, it decided to ask the Band whether it would be interested in experimenting with a new review process that would be complementary to the co-operative philosophy of the Interface Committee. The proposal was:

- ❑ to establish an Application Review Committee with representatives from the community, the applicant, affected government departments and the ERCB;
- ❑ in order to permit the community to fully participate in the Committee, the ERCB agreed to fund the services of experts;
- ❑ the Committee would meet and review the application jointly with each party identifying any concerns, with the applicant providing answers;
- ❑ if the review process resolved all of the issues and concerns, the ERCB would issue its approval;
- ❑ if the parties could not resolve a specific issue or concern, the ERCB would appoint a Board panel and convene a hearing to consider that specific issue. Its decision would be made in the normal manner.

All involved parties agreed to the ERCB's proposal, the committee met and reached agreement on the project, and approval was granted to Syncrude. Syncrude estimated that by avoiding a public hearing it had saved $200,000.

Assessment of the Public Involvement Program

1. It has been demonstrated that parties with different objectives can work together co-operatively for their mutual benefit.

    - ❑ the Community has achieved significant benefits in only two years, whereas prior to 1985 its confrontational approach had produced nothing but headlines and media publicity.

- ☐ the companies have discovered a new way of introducing proposed changes, which is constructive and efficient.

- ☐ government departments and agencies have been able to adopt a more sympathetic and creative approach to problem solving in the co-operative committee environment which was much more difficult, if not impossible, during the confrontational regime.

2. The process has resulted in win/win conclusions as compared to the previous win/lose results that followed from an adversarial public hearing. It is important to recognize that because the legislation provides for a public hearing, it creates an incentive for the applicant to participate in a co-operative program and it permits the community to participate, knowing that if the outcome is not satisfactory, it can still request a hearing. This balancing of incentives ensures serious co-operative efforts.

3. The environmental/health concerns are being examined on a co-operative basis and the major differences between the parties are gradually being reduced. Industry and government now agree that there are odour problems that should be corrected and the community is becoming aware that monitoring shows much lower impacts than they previously believed.

4. The process is fragile because the parties have their own objectives and sometimes the actions of one party conflicts with the objectives of another party.

5. The success of PI programs inevitably depends to a significant extent on the personal rapport and trust of the various parties. If trust, respect and sympathy are not present, PI will not succeed. Therefore, careful selection of the participating members is crucial.

9. Fraser-Thompson Corridor Review, British Columbia

Background

The Fraser Thompson (F-T) Corridor extends from Chilliwack to the Alberta border and encompasses some 100,000 people in a dozen communities plus a further 3,000 people on 60-70 occupied Indian reserves. The corridor contains the main CNR line, the Trans-Canada and Yellowhead Highways, three oil and gas pipelines, and B.C. Hydro's high voltage transmission towers.

Between early 1984 and January 1986 the Federal Environment Assessment Review Office (FEARO) conducted an environmental planning review of all transportation activities in the F-T corridor. This project was triggered by the CNR Twin Tracking review and was carried out by its Panel. However, the F-T Corridor was quite distinct and separate from the CNR project.

Management

The decision environment was conditioned by a number of factors: public involvement is an integral part of FEARO's mandate and operating style, the experience with the CNR Twin Tracking Review indicated that other issues in the corridor needed to be dealt with and there was strong public interest and support in the corridor for this further review. Input from government agencies and many interest groups (environmental, recreational, fish and wildlife) played a significant role in shaping the final recommendations of the Panel, as did the positions taken by the Alliance of Tribal Councils and their member councils and bands.

Process

Objectives

❑ to identify public concerns about transportation development and resource use

❑ to establish a management regime for future transportation activities, including opportunities for public involvement.

Approaches

A basically consultative approach was taken by inviting a broad range of participants from government, transportation, public groups and Indian bands to participate.

Techniques

❑ a tabloid publication was developed and widely distributed to describe the situation and invite people to contribute their ideas and suggestions.

❑ the principal technique employed was the workshop. The first cycle was held in the communities of Vancouver, Lytton and Kamloops during March 1985. The basic agenda was an outline of the situation followed by a round table discussion guided by the participants, including Panel members. Attendance ranged from 15 to 40; most workshops lasted most of the day. Participants were recruited by specific invitations to known stake-holders, a broad mailing list and the

9. Fraser-Thompson Corridor Review, British Columbia

local newspaper. The Panel chairman provided some general direction to the discussion. In the largest workshop, the group was divided into sub-groups to provide participants with more air-time, even though this format is a little cumbersome to operate.

☐ a discussion paper was prepared after the first set of workshops and was distributed before the second series which occurred in June at the same locations and with largely the same participants.

☐ informal consultation took place through many one-on-one telephone conversations with participants between the two series of workshops; while time-consuming, this was most important.

Effectiveness of Techniques

The tabloid, the workshops and the informal consultation techniques were all highly effective. The tabloid drew on technical material prepared on the corridor by a consultant before the public program commenced.

Results

The Panel identified a number of problems and deficiencies in the current government procedures for environmental planning and management of corridor transportation activities. It recommended the creation of an amended system which would provide for increased opportunities for public involvement. Feedback from the participants was very positive. In addition, there was much positive spillover among the participants on their own agendas; gaps which had developed between organizations over the years were repaired.

10. Sand Disposal Near Steveston, British Columbia

Background

The Fraser River Harbour Commission dredges over half a million cubic metres of sand a year from the Fraser River to maintain the waterway. When its usual disposal site was sold to become a park, the Commission piled rip-rap around a low sandy island in the river and dumped sand on it for a total cost of $800,000. The Commission proposed to build a bridge to the island and truck the sand off to commercial users. At this point, strong opposition developed from a number of interests in the adjacent community of Steveston.

Management

Public Involvement was introduced for several reasons. The concerned people took the initiative and created an embarrassing public protest, federal government policies favoured this approach and at least one Commissioner was supportive of a consultative process.

This project took place between May and October, 1983.

Process

Objectives

☐ to find a publicly acceptable means of disposing of dredged sand

☐ to restore harmonious relationships between the Commission and the community.

10. Sand Disposal Near Steveston, British Columbia

Approaches
While a consultative approach was taken with the leaders of community interest groups, soliciting from them suggestions about solutions for the problem, an information-feedback approach was used with the general public. It outlined six alternative solutions and invited them to choose one and say why.

Techniques
A social profile was prepared of Steveston to identify the character of the community, describe its various groups and leaders, discover its formal and informal communication channels, and find out people's knowledge of and attitudes to the Commission and its sand disposal project.

A planning workshop with group leaders was held to explore the situation and develop alternative solutions for the problem. A dozen groups were represented together with four federal agencies - the Commission, Public Works Canada, Fisheries and Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard.

Next, a flyer was prepared and distributed as an insert in the local newspaper and as a poster in public places. It described the situation and the Commission's problem, outlined six alternative solutions, recognized six concerns raised by local residents, advertised an open house for the following week and solicited readers' views through a tear-off coupon.

The Open House enabled a number of people to obtain further information about the project and to talk with the Commission and its staff directly.

A concluding open house with the same group leaders and agency personnel was preceded by a harbour tour which enable all to increase their appreciation of the situation facing the Commission.

Effectiveness of Techniques

The Social profile provided a useful overview of the community and disclosed a substantially positive attitude towards the Commission except for this one problem. During interviewing for the profile, trust and credibility was developed so that there was a good response to invitations to the planning workshop.

The first planning workshop established the foundation for a joint problem-solving process and ensured that each participant had the same basic data base about the situation and understood the views of each other.

The flyer gave the general public the main points in the issue and provided all with an easy opportunity to respond; 14 mailed in coupons which was rather less than anticipated.

The Open House attracted some 60 people and resulted in free-flowing conversations during visits which averaged an hour in length; 39 people completed the checklist provided.

The second planning workshop, following the informative harbour tour, led one participant to propose a six point solution which was acceptable to the four federal agency representatives and to all 12 of the interest group representatives.

The total cost of this consultation process was $34,000.

Results

The program enabled the Commission to identify a generally acceptable method of sand disposal and also restored good relationships between itself and the community.

11. Pest Management in Plantations: A Consultative Approach, New Brunswick

This project was not described by the participants as a win-win exercise. Those contacted agreed that it failed to achieve its public involvement objective, which was to develop a consultative process for the resolution of issues, the development of consensus, and the enhancement of communication among key stakeholders.

Background

In the summer of 1984 representatives of federal and provincial departments in New Brunswick, and industry, met to discuss conflict resolution with respect to pest management in the Maritimes. It was decided to establish a Steering Committee to undertake further analysis and recommend how to proceed. The Committee included representatives of the above groups and of other government agencies.

Process

A pilot exercise was undertaken using the Adaptive Environmental Assessment and Management (AEAM) approach for conflict resolution and consensus building, to address the specific issue of pest management in tree plantations.

After initial discussions the objectives of the pilot study were established as:

(i) to develop a consultative process for the resolution of issues related to the management of plantations and pests associated with plantations;

(ii) to develop consensus and enhance communications between key stake holders inforest plantation management, and;

(iii) to develop a management-oriented model of the spruce budmoth/ spruce forest ecosystem as a case study example of pest management in plantations.

Techniques

In attempting to achieve these objectives a four stage exercise was undertaken, including an AEAM modelling workshop on the specific issue of plantation pest management, a literature review, a second workshop to design a consultative process for addressing the issue, and an institutional analysis. A wide range of interest groups were involved in each workshop which were held in July and November 1985 respectively.

Outcome

While there was a useful exchange between the representatives of industry, governments, research agencies and academics, conflict between various of these groups and public interest groups (particularly the Ecology Action Centre) was renewed and, if anything, further entrenched. There is little to suggest that the consultative process developed would be any more useful were it to be used to address other forestry issues. There is a need for a longer-term program of consultation and concensus building and lower levels of expectation for the successful short-term resolution of highly contentious issues.

The project is included in the manual for the lessons which can be learned from its difficulties. While a number of reasons were suggested for the outcome of the process, they seem to coalesce around the following:

1. The issue was highly contentious (pest management in forest plantations) and the positions of the various groups were already well entrenched. Developing mutual trust and understanding given this volatile a situation is necessarily a long term process.

2. The terms of reference of the study were broad and vague, and the issue consequently was difficult to meaningfully deal with. In retrospect some of the participants thought that it would have been better to have selected a smaller topic on which there was more specific information, and which had not yet generated entrenched positions.

3. The last problem area contributing to the project's difficulties involved the issue of representativeness, especially of the members of the public interest groups represented on the study. To the degree that they became sympathetic to aspects of the process they were thought by some other group members to have been co-opted. This problem illustrates the essential need for representatives to have close and continuing contact with the constituencies they represent.

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INTRODUCTION

This volume is the reference manual on appropriate techniques for public involvement programs. It is divided into two parts: **Part 1** contains the general introductory overview, followed by three chapters which provide detailed information on some of the most commonly used techniques. **Part 2** contains the **"Dictionary of Techniques"**. This is a comprehensive directory of all of the available techniques in public involvement, including those which are relatively recent in development.

HOW TO USE THIS VOLUME

First, a caution: before attempting to employ any of the techniques in this reference volume, it is essential to be familiar with Volume 2 which outlines the process for developing a public involvement program.

Second: The reader is not expected to read this manual from cover to cover. The techniques are presented and organized to enable a project manager to key in to those particular techniques compatible with the approach intended, and with the public involvement objectives to be achieved.

GUIDELINES FOR SELECTING TECHNIQUES

Techniques can be selectedusing Table 1 as a guide. However, it is critical to understand that most techniques can be used in many different ways, depending on the resources employed, the information employed, the objectives of the program, and the depth of the program.

Techniques act as facilitators; they are a necessary part of a public involvement program, but they are not sufficient by themselves to ensure effective public involvement. The techniques should be used as part of an overall public involvement plan, integrated into the decision making process.

Similarly, a program can be using the best technique(s) available, but if the agency lacks sincerity, integrity and commitment about the value of public involvement, the

HOW TO USE THIS VOLUME

GUIDELINES FOR SELECTING TECHNIQUES

MANAGEMENT OF FUNDS
LEGAL AUTHORITY
COMMUNITY RELATIONS
POLICY/GOALS
MANAGING/DELEGATING
HIRING
E

public will be skeptical and the program will fail.

Virtually all of the techniques outlined in this volume need to be employed with, at a minimum, the advice of someone experienced and trained in public involvement.

There is no one single best technique for a given activity in a project. Any one of a number of techniques may be appropriate; how effective they are depends as much on the people in the program and their flexibility in handling issues as on the specific content of the techniques. It is always possible to change a public involvement plan and incorporate new or different techniques. Similarly, the public can change during the process; at different points or stages, different techniques may be necessary.

It is advisable to use several techniques in a program, rather than to rely on just one. Different techniques will reach different groups of people, and some are appropriate to accomplish one involvement objectives, and others a different objective.

THE CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

While many systems have been developed for classifying public involvement programs and techniques, one that has proven to be useful is outlined in Figure 1.

The danger of showing techniques on a continuum is that it is easy to assume that there is only one consensus building technique appropriate to a particular situation. In fact, during the course of a complex decision it may be desirable to use a wide variety of techniques.

The techniques in this manual fall into one of five categories:

☐ public information/ education
☐ information feedback
☐ consultation
☐ extended involvement
☐ joint planning

The survey of federal agencies and departments in February and March 1987, identified the need for further information on consultation, extended involvement and joint planning techniques in particular. Public information and information feedback techniques can be used on their own or in conjunction with one of the more in-

Figure 1
A Continuum of Public Involvement Approaches and Selected Techniques[1]

"Knowledge about a decision"	**Public Information** Advertising Newspaper Inserts with Reply Cards
"Being heard before the decision"	**Public Information Feedback** Briefs Focus Groups
"Having an influence on the decision"	**Consultation** Public Meetings (traditional format) Conferences Workshops/Problem-Solving Meetings **Extended Involvement** Advisory Groups/Task Forces/Charrettes
"Agreeing to the decision"	**Joint Planning** Consultation/Mediation/Negotiation/ Niagara Process

1. Note: This chart presents a continuum of public involvement approaches. You, as the practitioner, must determine what it is that you want to achieve in terms of involvement. It is then up to you to identify the most appropriate approaches/technologies/actions which you will need to use to achieve these ends.

volvement-oriented approaches.

Each of the general approaches is defined in the following pages. The remainder of the chapter then discusses factors which affect the selection of an overall approach.

❑ Public Information

The simplest form of communication with the public is to keep them informed about ongoing agency decision making. Whether these efforts are elaborate publications or regular press releases and news stories, there is one crucial point to remember: the public has a well-developed sense for recognizing self-serving propaganda. Extensive media advertising has caused most citizens to become very skeptical of 'glowing reports'. Keep this in mind when publishing any information. It is important to stick to the facts, and to exclude editorial opinion, or at least separate your views from the rest of the text. Striving to portray the realistic situation, including the admission of past and present mistakes, will build public trust in your program. 'One-way' communication methods are rarely used alone, but are normally used in conjunction with information feedback, consultation or extended involvement methods.

Some public information techniques are:

- news releases
- news conferences
- newsletters/pamphlets
- viewing centres/audio visuals/public displays
- technical papers

❑ Public Information Feedback

Public information feedback techniques are used to obtain information from the public. They include methods used to develop overviews of general public opinion, as well as techniques inviting the public to respond to a specific proposal or set of proposals.

Public information feedback techniques include:

- analysis of newspaper coverage
- surveys of knowledge and opinion
- community profiles/social pro files
- briefs and written submissions in response to position papers

❑ Consultation

Where issues call for considerable discussion between line managers and the public, some form of consultation is needed. A consultation method may be used as your principal method, or it may be used as part of an extended involvement program. Remember, however, whatever method is used will demand substantial commitment in organization, support, staff time, and use of the results.

Many of the public's interests in environmental issues and resource use are represented by organized environmental groups. Some organizations are unique to local communities, but most are part of provincial or national associations. There is, therefore, a good network of groups which have access to common information and resources, and are often concerned with your project.

As part of your overall approach to ongoing public involvement, you can keep the lines of communication with these groups open by:

❑ including them on a mailing list for department publications;

❑ holding meetings with organization executive members to air general concerns and trade information; and

❑ holding an annual meeting with organized groups to assess progress in your area, and to identify concerns.

Another good way to promote dialogue with the public is to meet with service clubs, unions, the Chamber of Commerce and similar organizations. By attending their meetings and requesting a place on the agenda, you get a chance to contact many people without having them give up another evening.

Consultation techniques for specific projects and policy issues include:

- working plan reviews
- public meetings
- workshops
- open houses

❑ Extended Involvementand Joint Planning

Extended involvement and joint planning techniques demand the most support from project managers. Therefore, they should be selected only where the issues are major, complex, or particularly controversial. Extended involvement techniques stretch over time periods and require the support of both public information and consultation techniques; thus they provide the most scope for adapting to local conditions. Joint

planning techniques result in shared decision making, in which the public is represented on decision making or problem solving bodies. As there is generally much dialogue between members of the public and project managers, extended involvement and joint planning methods result in a knowledgeable group of citizens who can assist in future issues, or give advice on an ongoing public involvement program.

Techniques include:

- advisory committees
- task groups
- joint planning teams

CHOOSING AN APPROACH

The selection of an approach to a public involvement program is a matter of judgment, although the decision should be made easier if the process outlined in Volume 2 has been followed. Depending on the program's objectives, a project manager may choose to limit the public involvement program to education or information feedback techniques, or may wish to utilize more participative approaches. Some situations invite the use of consultative approaches, while others demand extended involvement or joint planning approaches.

Table 1 provides some guidelines in selecting between consultation and extended involvement approaches, a choice which project managers can sometimes find difficult.

The seriousness and complexity of the situation affect the use of various consultation and extended involvement techniques, and the amount of effort and support required to make the program work.

Public involvement programs take time, cost money, and raise expectations. This is not bad, if a manager understands the need for a clear commitment to the program selected. In general, the more complex the method chosen, the greater must be the agency's commitment to support the process and to use the results. The public often come to a public involvement program jaded and suspicious that their views will have little real impact on decisions. Growth in public support, personal satisfaction with participation, and effectiveness of results depend on how the manager conveys his/her commitment to working with the public, and on heeding it's advice.

Table 1
Choosing a Public Involvement Approach

Considerations Which Suggest Consultative Approaches	Considerations Which Suggest Extended Involvement or Joint Planning Approaches
Issues have minor impact on the environment, or are mainly a matter of public preferences which can be accommodated by changes in design of plans.	Issues have serious implications for the environment; significant economic and/or social impacts, with trade-offs, are likely.
Narrow range of issues is involved.	Wide range of complex issues is involved.
A small number of people are interested in the situation, generally focussed on a special area of interest.	Many public and agency groups are concerned with the issues; concerns are shared by diverse advocates.
Issues are urgent and must be dealt with in a short period of time (weeks or two to three months).	Issues are important but there is time available for planning (six months to one or two years).
The public is concerned but is not demanding an extensive formal involvement program.	The public strongly desires a formal involvement program.
The agency has the capacity to support a modest program.	The agency has the capacity to support a complex program.

Commitment not only applies to the agency people 'on the firing line' but also to the senior officials to whom they report. A manager must check the limits of decision-making authority with superiors in advance, so they can provide backup when the going gets rough and the unexpected, but ever possible, occurs. As the degree of public involvement increases, so does the degree of commitment required on the part of the agency.

The remainder of the volume is structured as follows. Chapters 1 to 3 of Part 1 provide detailed information on some of the most commonly used techniques.

Chapter 1 Public Information Feedback Techniques:
Polls and questionnaires; interviewing; social profiles; content analyses

Chapter 2 Public Consultation Techniques:
Public Meetings, Open Houses and Workshops

Figure 1
Degrees of Public Involvement and Commitment

Degree of Involvement	Message to the Public
Public Information Release	You want them to know about it.
Public Education Program	You want them to understand and support your program.
Opinion Sampling	You care about what people think and conduct yourself accordingly.
Checking Plans for Acceptance	You are willing to alter plans and operations to accommodate their views.
Extended Advisory Involvement	You seriously expect to implement most of their advice.
Joint Planning and Decision-Making	You are fully committed to using the results in all but the most extenuating circumstances.

Chapter 3 Extended Involvement Techniques: Advisory Committees, Consensus Guidelines, and Chairing Extended Involvement Groups

Part 2 of this volume is a dictionary of virtually all public involvement techniques which are in current use. Since new techniques are developed from time to time, and others tend to be discontinued, the dictionary may not be exhaustive. For each technique, a brief description is provided, and its advantages and limitations noted.

As a General Rule, The Higher the Degree of Involvement . . .

The more staff time and energy is required.
The more money it costs to support the involvement process.
The more detailed and sophisticated resource information is requested by participants.
The greater is the expectation of participants that their contributions will be valued and used.
The greater visible commitment must be made by the professional to using the results, adhering to plans, keeping participants informed of progress, and explaining any deviations from participant recommendations or decisions.

Final Thoughts from the Practitioners.....

Use several techniques in a program, rather than relying on just one.

Remember that as the degree of public involvement increases, so does the degree of commitment required on the part of the agency.

CHAPTER 1
INFORMATION FEEDBACK TECHNIQUES

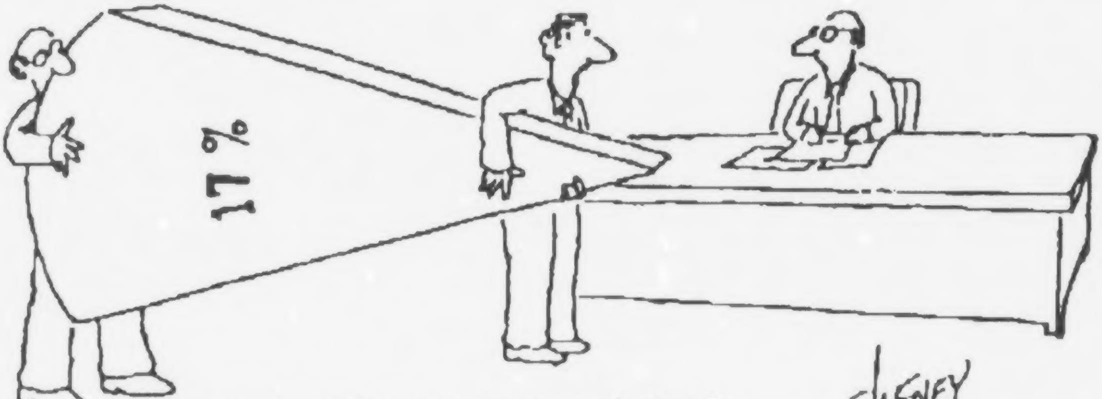
This chapter provides in-depth detail on the three most common public information feedback techniques: polls; and questionnaires, interviewing; social profiles.

USE OF POLLS AND QUESTIONNAIRES

Polls and questionnaires are both effective means of assessing public opinion. Their use by federal agencies is, however, strictly regulated by Statistics Canada.

Nature of Polls and Questionnaires

Polls are a technique for measuring the mix of opinions held by the public. They are conducted by trained interviewers who ask each person interviewed exactly the same questions, and in the same order. These questions are pretested to be sure they are clear, unbiased, and elicit the information desired. The people interviewed will be part of a sample population chosen using rules accepted by professionals in the field as guaranteeing the



We found that statistic you were looking for.

"randomness" or lack of bias in the sample chosen. Statistical research has been conducted to establish standards for how many people must be interviewed from a total population to ensure reliability of the findings to certain levels of confidence, e.g., the figures are accurate to plus or minus five percent. The level of confidence can be increased by increasing the number of interviews conducted.

Polls differ from questionnaires in that the responses are tallied by the interviewer. Questionnaires are completed by the person responding, and are often more open-ended. Because they may provide more information, including information other than that anticipated by the questioner. However, polls – precisely because they are not open-ended – have greater statistical reliability.

Use of Polls and Questionnaires

Before any claims of statistical validity or reliability can be made for the results of a poll or questionnaire, the design of the "sample" – those people invited to complete the interviews or questionnaire – must meet rigorous standards to ensure that the sample is truly random. In addition the questions need to be pretested to ensure that they are not biased, and obtain the information they were designed to elicit. This means that the design of any interview protocol or questionnaire should be done by someone with professional expertise in questionnaire design. Amateurish questionnaires may produce charges of bias or invasion of privacy, and not result in information that is credible enough to be used. The very virtue of polls and questionnaires – their quantifiability – is also their weakness if they are badly done. Because results of polls and questionnaires are quantifiable, they give an aura of objectivity that no other technique can give. This can be very reassuring to a decision maker who must make a difficult decision in the face of strong opposition no matter which choice is made. But a poorly designed poll will be quoted as "fact" just as much as a well designed poll. For this reason, polls, and to a lesser extent questionnaires, should normally be conducted by people with extensive training in conducting them. This usually means, however, that external consultants must be used, so the costs of conducting polls are relatively high.

Advantages and Limitations

The primary advantage of polls and questionnaires is their ability to reach out beyond the organized groups to the "unorganized public". With most public involvement techniques it is possible to determine the range of views held by the public, but not the proportion of people who hold each view. If carefully designed, a poll or questionnaire will help determine the proportion of people holding the different views. If there is a concern, for example, that only a small vocal minority is being heard from, a questionnaire would tell to what extent the views being heard are held by the public at large. Polls and questionnaires also gather opinions from people who would be unwilling to speak out at a public meeting or other forum. A questionnaire could be administered by local people hired especially for this purpose, or by volunteers, resulting in further community interest in and "ownership" of the project.

There are, however, important limitations on the use of polls and questionnaires. Drafting the background planning report to a questionnaire and obtaining approval from Statistics Canada for the survey can be a time-consuming process.

Another limitation of polls and questionnaires is that both give equal weight to all respondents, even though this does not reflect political reality. A person who cares deeply about an issue is given the same weight as an uninterested individual, whatever their political clout. Knowledge about the mix of views in the general public does not necessarily tell the political balance of power in the community. Polls and questionnaires can be designed to solve this problem, though, by asking questions about the respondent's familiarity with the issue, and by showing differences in opinions among people who are very familiar with the issue, as distinct from those who are not.

Polls and questionnaires give a snapshot picture of public opinion at a given time. That opinion can change rapidly, particularly if the public starts out largely uninformed about the issue. A completely accurate picture of public sentiment at one point in time may not be at all accurate two months later.

The costs of analyzing large numbers of the responses to polls or questionnaires can also be high. It usually takes a staff member at least as long to analyze and record each response as it took the citizen to provide the response in the first place. When dealing with several thousand responses, this can run into considerable staff time. Because of the costs involved, if it is not necessary to know the exact proportion of viewpoints in a community, but simply general information about public attitudes, it might be preferable to conduct a series of informal interviews or focus groups.

Despite the virtues of polls, they do not replace the political process. They do provide some indication, though, of how representative the people participating are of the public at large.

CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS

Advantages and Limitations

Informal interviews can be an effective part of public involvement programs. A series of 30-60 minutes interviews with representatives of all the key interests can provide a quick understanding of the issue, the dynamics between the interests, and the intensity of their interest in the issue. Several days of interviews can often produce an extremely large amount of information. Informal interviews permit the exploration of a subject in some depth. They do not limit respondents to the choices that might be shown on a questionnaire. They also enable exploring preferences, which helps to understand the motivations and intensity of feeling which underlie these opinions. Interviews also permit exploration of topics other than those which are predetermined to be important, and in this way can be helpful in identifying new issues or concerns that had not previously been considered. Interviews help build trust and credibility as well as an information base.

The inherent problem with interviews, though, is that they are time-consuming, and it is possible to interview only a limited number of people. A 30-45 minute interview may take a total of 2-3 hours of staff time to set up the interview appointment, plan the interview, drive to the interview, conduct it, work up one's notes into a summary report, and transcribe the interviews for the files. This usually means that it is normally possible to interview only a limited number of people. This can be perfectly appropriate if the information needed is the opinions of the organized interests, or community leaders. But it is not possible to know for sure either that the people talked to are representative of all the interests in the community or what the proportion of viewpoints is in the larger community.

A less time consuming and costly alternative to face-to-face interviews is interviewing by telephone. This should be used when in-depth interviews are not required.

Interviews also lack visibility, since only the people interviewed know what occurred in them. This means that the public (and the decision makers) have to take it on faith that the interviewers have accurately reflected the information received in the interview.

The emphasis in informal interviewing is on qualitative, not quantitative, information. There are two major reasons why it is not appropriate to claim any quantitative validity for the information received through informal interviews: "sampling bias" and "interviewer effect". "Sampling bias" simply means that by targeting the groups and individuals to be interviewed, rather than making a random selection, a "bias" has been introduced into the sample. It may be a very useful bias – a bias towards the people who have the kind of information needed – but it precludes making any quantitative statements about what the public feels since it may be an unrepresentative sample of the public.

"Interviewer effect" refers to the fact that when questions are asked in different ways, or by different people, different information is elicited. As a result, the way a question is asked one time may produce different information than apparently the same question asked a different way another time. The response that is given to one staff member may be different than to the same question asked by another staff member. This is why the wording of questions is so carefully designed and pretested as part of conducting a poll or survey. Even if the same topics are covered in the course of a series of informal interviews, the fact that the wording is a little different each time and the context in which the topic comes up is different, produces an interviewer effect that removes any possibility of claiming quantitative validity.

Guidelines on Conducting Interviews

Clarifying the Purpose: The first, rather obvious, step in conducting interviews is to clarify exactly what is to be learned from the interviews. When the first call is made to set up an appointment the question that will be asked is, "What is the purpose of the interview?" Not only is a clear succinct answer needed to get people to agree to be interviewed, but clarity about the purpose of the interview is also necessary in order to know who it is that needs to be interviewed. Although interviews do permit unstructured discussion, they should not be disorganized "fishing expeditions", or people will be offended.

Selecting the People to be Interviewed: Even when no pretense is made of taking a scientific sample, the credibility of a public involvement program requires that an effort be made to include all major points of view. Major groups which have been left out will then assume the assessment is biased. If there are 10 environmental groups it is not necessary to interview all 10. However, representatives of enough groups should be interviewed to be sure that the differences among them, as well as their political dynamics, are understood.

Some groups may act as an umbrella for others. It is sometimes a good idea to phone those you don't intend to interview and ask, " If I visit with (an organization) to discuss this issue, do you think I will cover most of the concerns your organization has on this issue?" If not, you can respond to any remaining points then on the phone. This is a cost-effective use of the interest group leaders' time as well as the agency's. The interest groups' usually appreciate it. As well, the informal network that exists among non-governmental organizations will enable you to learn of other organizations that should be interviewed. It will also help communicate the results of your interview rapidly.

Setting up Interviews: It is normal practice to arrange an appointment in advance for the interview. Fortunately there is a subtle flattery involved in asking someone for an interview – the implication is that their views are very important or they are very wise – so most people will willingly set up an interview. They will, however, want to know: 1) the purpose of the interview, 2) how the information will be used (including its confidentiality), 3) who or what kinds of people are being interviewed, and 4) how long the interview will take.

If possible, it is best if the person who will conduct the interview sets up the appointment, since this gives a chance to establish some initial rapport. But since this is a time-consuming process it is often done by someone else. If this is the case be sure that the person setting up the interviews is thoroughly acquainted with the purposes and uses of the interview indicated above. Also be sure that the person setting up interview appointments allows time for: 1) travelling from interview to interview, and 2) about 30 minutes after each interview to fill in notes while the interview is fresh.

If the appointment has been set up several days or more in advance by someone other than the interviewer, the interviewer may want to call the day before to confirm the interview. This reassures both the interviewer and the person being interviewed that their time will not be wasted, and may begin to build rapport.

Ideally, the interviewee should be met "on his or her ground", at a place and time determined by them - for example, at the citizen group's office.

Length of an Interview: Normally, leaders of active groups, interest, or agencies are willing to give 30-60 minutes to an interview. Anything longer than 60 minutes will depend on how interested the person being interviewed is in the topic. Anything shorter than thirty minutes will be so rushed – particularly since some time is invariably lost getting in and out of their offices or homes – that many of the benefits of informal interviews will be lost. Some experienced interviewers have found, though, that even if an individual will only schedule for a short time, if they are interested in the topic that time will usually be permitted to expand. But if a limited interview time has been scheduled, and the person being interviewed is clearly restive, do not insult them by just taking the time whether they are comfortable with it or not.

Asking Questions: An effective way of conducting interviews is to use an informal structured approach, in which the question areas are identified beforehand and used as a guide in conducting the interview, although the order in which questions are asked may change. It is especially important to have a structured format if more than one interviewer is used, in order to have some degree of comparability.

When several interviewers are used, there should be frequent meetings so that interviewers can compare notes on issues, interview structure, questions, and interview techniques. Often interviewers change their approach over time and it is important to maintain consistency.

There are two general rules to observe in how questions are posed. These are:

Don't ask leading questions. When a question is asked such as "Don't you think that Project X is needed?" it's clear that the answer the questioner wants is "yes". The question is structured in such a way that it "leads" to the desired answer. Research shows that people who do not have strong opinions are likely to allow themselves to be led. The desired answer will be obtained, but it will be worthless as a predictor of people's position on the issue. People who already have a strong opinion are likely to be insulted by leading questions, and will draw the conclusion that the interviews are biased.

Questions should be open-ended. If the question asked is, "Do you believe Project X is needed?" the answer is likely to be "yes" or "no". Obviously such an answer is only minimally helpful when in-depth information is needed about what kinds of problems are occurring, or how important they are. As a result it is better to ask open-ended questions – questions that cannot be answered with a yes or no answer. Examples of open-ended questions are "What do you think future requirements will be?" or "What do you think are the pros and cons of Project X?" or "How can issue Y best be resolved?" Such questions encourage more complete answers, and also permit the person being interviewed to address topics or raise issues important to them. Follow up on some points with "What leads you to say this?" (Phrasing it this way gets better results than "Why?")

Note Taking: It is important in conducting an interview to establish a comfortable relationship with the person being interviewed. This is difficult to do if poring over notes, maintaining little or no eye contact, and struggling to keep up with the individual. Most experienced interviewers use either of two strategies:

Brief Notes/Prompt Review. One technique frequently employed by experienced note takers is to keep brief notes of the interviews, stressing only the most significant points, and to go to a quiet place immediately after each interview and fill in the notes from memory. The original notes serve as reminders ot other notes which need to be written down. Time for this "debriefing" must therefore be built into the interview schedule.

Brief Notes/Tape Recorder. Some interviewers prefer to take brief notes, but use a tape recorder as a back-up to fill in the notes later. This is particularly good if there is premium on having the person's exact words – as there would be for a journalist. Some people may feel intimidated by a tape recorder, or may be more cautious with their comments for fear the tape will get into someone else's hands. On the whole though, most people seem to be comfortable with a tape recorder, and in fact, appreciate it's accuracy. However, transcribing from a tape recorder is a very time-consuming process.

Confidentiality: In return for getting candid information, the interviewer must usually make a commitment about the confidentiality of the information. Normally the commitment would be that only people within the agency who are working directly on the project or study will have access to the summaries from individual interviews. If there is a need – and there usually is in public involvement programs – for an overall summary of the interviews which will be distributed to a larger audience, then the report must be written in ways that protect the identity of individuals who provided sensitive information. Anytime the information is going to be made available to people other than the interviewer, the interviewer has a responsibility to inform the person of this at the beginning of the interview.

Sharing Information: Almost invariably as an interview ends the person being interviewed will ask questions like "How did Group Z feel about this?" or "What have other people you've interviewed felt about ...?" These questions immediately raise all the problems for the interviewer of confidentiality, leading, or bias. Yet there is a simple reciprocity to these questions which is hard to ignore: this person has just given some information and is now asking for some in return. Obviously this is a judgment call, but within the limits of confidentiality most interviewers do respond with some general statement similar to those which would be contained in the summary of the interviews which will be made public. The important thing is to be prepared for the possibility of such questions, so that confidentiality isn't inadvertently violated if the interviewer is taken by surprise.

COMMUNITY PROFILES

The community or social profile is a comprehensive summary of the key characteristics of the people of a community or study area. Its purpose is to orient planners, engineers and administrators to the social and cultural realities which they need to understand and take into account if a project, program or policy is to be accepted. It can also be applied to a corporation or government agency by a citizen group.

Rationale

In the past, new policies and projects have often generated hostile public reactions because the proponents failed to understand and respond to the values, goals, concerns and views of the people affected. The community profile provides the core of a social data base needed to balance the technical information available to planners and decision makers with an appreciation of the humanistic and political considerations involved.

For these key people to make sensitive decisions, they need a character sketch of the community so they can relate their responsibilities and proposals to it. From the community profile, they should grasp how and why this community is different from others, and how it is likely to respond to a new activity just as a personal profile of an individual enables a manager to judge how this person might respond to a new assignment.

Data Collection

First, review non-reactive sources of information, many of which will often be available outside the community eg. back issues of the weekly press; aerial photographs, preferably 10 years apart; local histories in the regional library; university theses and government reports on the community. Make a content analysis of this material, identifying information under key headings such as: community issues; active organizations; leaders; attitudes towards growth; knowledge of and attitude to the client and/or the proposal.

Second, identify any people knowledgeable about the community who live beyond it eg. civil servants now in a provincial or regional centre who presently service the community or who used to live in it. Interview some of these people by telephone or face to face in an informal way; have a list of issues and questions you want to explore, but allow the conversation to be flexible rather than using a structured questionnaire.

Next, visit the community and initially immerse yourself in it, observing its people and how they spend their time and effort. Experience a day in the life of the community as unobtrusively as possible and reflect on how its residents view their world.

Now start to visit some key people and interview them informally. A conversation about the history of the community provides a comfortable starting point and usually yields many insights into leadership, issues, factions, etc. Through it you will often be introduced to the elders of the community.

Look for people who have had long residence in the community, much contact with its residents and are sufficiently secure in their positions that they can talk freely. Some of these are the public health nurse, leaders of voluntary associations, some business people, bank managers, clergy, the staff of service agencies, the school principal (and the janitor). Interview local government officials and elected representatives later so you will be better able to interpret their positions and discuss them in depth.

In talking with these people, explore subjects until you obtain a consistent position from at least three sources. If a certain organization appears to be a key factor in community decision making according (a) to your analysis of the local weekly, (b) according to a provincial civil servant located in the capital but knowledgeable through his work in the community, and is (c) corroborated by two of these conversations in the community, count that as a fact established. You do not need to raise it in subsequent interviews, but can focus them on other subjects which are still unclear. This approach employs the navigator's technique of "triangulation" to establish facts with reasonable accuracy.

In some cases, the range of people interviewed is restricted by the fact that clients do not want their interest in the community to become public knowledge. However, there are usually some key people from whom valid information can be obtained and who are accustomed to working under these constraints (eg. bank managers, clergy, provincial or federal civil servants, etc.).

The foregoing approach to data collection is always modified by the size and unique circumstances of each community.

Level of Effort

A trained and experienced social researcher (typically with the equivalent of a master's degree in applied social science) usually requires about ten days to complete a social profile. This usually breaks down into 1-1.5 days of pre-entry work, 5-6 days in the community and the remainder to write the 30-40 page report. This has proven workable with small rural communities, regional municipalities and cities up to the size of Calgary and Edmonton.

The social profile is designed to provide a charcoal sketch of the main features of the people of the area and how they view and manage their world. Subsequently, it can readily be updated and carried out in greater depth, as may be needed, for example, as part of a Social Impact Assessment. However, it is not a substitute for a standard sociological study, using a random sample of the population; should this methodology be required, a previously prepared social profile can be very helpful in designing the questionnaire.

The Report

The writing style must be simple and direct so that a busy manager or engineer can grasp the main points quickly and easily. Start with a map; eliminate jargon; omit heavy footnoting; place any large tables in an appendix, but first question if they are necessary. A photograph or two is often a more informative use of space.

The introduction to the report should indicate the sources of data, the limitations on data collection, the level of effort invested and a request for comments and suggestions.

Following the usual table of contents, executive summary and map, the remaining chapters can follow the headings outlined below.

In addition to a written report, some organizations which have to orient a number of project staff to the community will find it worthwhile to develop an audio-visual presentation of the social profile. This can be a 10 minutes video production or a simple one-projector with a pulsed soundtrack; portable equipment can provide instant orientation to visitors and new employees.

Suggested Report Contents

1. Local History

- identify early settlement, key events and past leaders
- what are the trends in land use?
- note population trends eg. age-sex distribution; migration; ethnic origin; occupations; education (see Census or planning studies).
- how does the history of the community help to explain its present position and character?

2. Industries and Occupations

- what are the main employers, markets, skills?
- how do these affect the community's behavior?

3. Development Issues

- what issues arose in past five years; who got involved; what happened; how was each issue resolved?
- what are current issues and what, if anything, is being done about them eg. planning studies etc.?
- identify attitudes to growth.
- what are the implications of the above for the agency and/or project?

4. Organizations and Leadership

- list the principal groups, their activities and officers, their role in the community.
- identify and give a brief description of community leaders and influentials eg. who have followers and are respect- ed for their opinions?
- what does this imply for the proponent and its plans?

5. Communication Channels

- outline the formal media eg. geographic coverage, capacity and credibility of each; circulation/audience of each.
- describe the informal networks - key nodes on grapevines; strategic listening posts in the community.
- what relevance have these channels for the agency and/or project?

6. Knowledge of and Attitudes to Client/ Industry/project

- what valid information, myths and areas of ignorance are evident in key people and groups?
- how does the above affect information and education requirements for the proposed activities?

Pages 23-26 are excerpted with permission from Conner, Desmond M., "Social Profile Workshop" in Constructive Citizen Participation: A Resource Book, Development Press, Victoria, B.C., Revised edition, 1988, pp. II 1-4.

7. Publics Affected

- summarize the key characteristics of each public eg. language; education; media and grapevines appropriate; organizations and leaders relevant etc.

- what implications has this for the formation of a Citizen's Advisory Committee and other techniques?

8. Observations and Conclusions

- provide a succinct outline of how the characteristics of the community appear to affect the agency and/or project and their implications for a public participation program.

ANALYZING PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT DATA (CONTENT ANALYSIS)

Once a public involvement program has been underway, extensive information about the views of the public, interest groups and other levels of government begins to accumulate.

Two major questions arise:

☐ How does one analyze and use all "public's" comments on the issue(s)?

☐ How does one organize and determine the relative importance of the data for the decision-makers who will ultimately respond?

Unfortunately, these two questions frequently are overlooked in the frenzy to complete the public involvement program and document it for the decision makers. This section, therefore, focuses on these two topics.

Analyzing Public Comment

In the early days of public involvement programs there was a tendency to sort public comment into two categories: for the proposed action and against the proposed action. The summary of several public meetings and several hundred letters might show that 427 supported the project and 373 opposed it. Since the potential number of people affected would be in the hundreds of thousands or even millions, the only conclusion to be drawn from this summary was that the proposed action was controversial - something which was already known.

Obviously, this kind of summary was unfair both to the public and to management trying to interpret what the public said. A four-page argument for a position and a one-sentence postcard were given equal weight. Man-

agement couldn't tell why people supported or opposed the action, the differences in opinion among various kinds of groups, or points of agreement among them. The choice for management was either to make decisions based on limited information, or laboriously wade through transcripts and hundreds of letters.

In recent years more sophisticated tools have been developed which better address the public's comments and provide important information for the decision-maker. In part these techniques have been developed to handle the massive amount of information generated by public involvement programs. Public involvement programs conducted by other agencies have, in a few cases, generated as many as 20,000 comments or letters to analyze. Since this made it impossible for management to be personally involved in reading the comments or letters, techniques had to be developed which provided management with adequate understanding of the nature of the public's comments.

The Difference Between Analysis and Evaluation

The purpose of an analysis is to summarize and display public comment in such a way that maximum information is available to decision-makers (and to the public) about what was said. To the extent possible, analysis should display public comment without interjecting interpretation or judgment.

Evaluation of public comment takes place after analysis and includes judgment and weighting, or assigning relative value. This is the task of the decision-maker, who may have to evaluate the relative importance, for example, of 315 handwritten letters versus 400 names on a petition. The decision-maker may also have to weight the importance of various user groups with the concerns of environmental groups living throughout the region. Obviously evaluation is an essential element of decision making, and analysis is the process of getting the information ready so that evaluation can occur.

Analytic Techniques

The most useful analytic techniques are based on content analysis. This is a research tool used in sociology, journalism, and political science to analyze the actual content (arguments, facts, logic) contained in newspaper articles, letters, and so forth. Content analysis has been used, for example, to conduct research comparing the relative frequency of certain topics in letters to the editor, as a means of identifying public priorities. The best-selling book, Megatrends, based its predictions of future trends on the increasing frequency with which certain topics were appearing in national media.

Two variations of content analysis that have been most useful in analyzing public comment are Content Summary Analysis and Codinvolve. For the purposes of this document, a brief description of Content Summary Analysis will be provided.

Content Summary Analysis is designed to capture the actual language of the public in describing its reasons for supporting or opposing a proposed action; it gives the decision-maker a "feel" for the intensity of the language used or how well thought out the arguments are. Content Summary Analysis is simple to use if the number of comments if relatively small. It becomes more complex if the number of comments is very large.

The steps in Content Summary Analysis are as follows:

1. Code responses for identification, origin, and affiliation. Each letter or comment received is assigned an identification code telling when and how the comment was received, and any information about the affiliation of the person making the comment. The identification code is important because it provides a means of answering questions about how people of different affiliation or living in different geographical areas feel about the issue, eg., how do people from outside the project area feel about the project compared to those living in the area? Does one user group feel differently from other user groups? Do taxpayers from one area of the region feel the same as those from the other parts of the region?

2. Make multiple copies. This step applies when comments are going to be physically stored on paper. If information is stored on a computer this step is unnecessary.

3. Select file codes. The next step is to identify the basic files or categories which will be needed. These can range from very simple to very sophisticated. Only two files might be needed - one for comments supporting the action and one for comments opposing the action. However, after reviewing the comments it may be observable that there are basically five reasons that people oppose the action and three reasons that they support it. In this case it would be useful to establish 10 files (six for opposing comments, including one for people who oppose it but do not give a reason, and four for supporting comments, including one file for people who support it without giving a reason). Each file or category is assigned a code number.

4. Conduct a first analysis. Read the entire comment or letter for its overall meaning. Then reread the comment, underlining all portions in which the content is related to the categories defined.

5. Code the comments. Go back through the comment or letter again assigning the appropriate code to each underlined comment. This coding process should include both the file code and the identification number. The identification number is noted for two reasons: it leads the decision-maker back to the entire letter if the comment is of particular interest, and it allows the comments in that file to be analyzed by origin or affiliation.

6. Conduct a second analysis. To ensure that the comment or letter has been analyzed objectively, it is recommended that the coded comment be reviewed by a second analyst. Any differences in opinion on how the comment should be coded can be resolved by discussion between the two analysts.

7. Store a complete copy of the marked-up comment or letter. This copy should be kept in a master file as documentation so that the public or management can always be shown how the analysis was done.

8. Store the coded comments in the appropriate files. If storing pieces of paper, a marked-up copy will need to be cut up and the slips containing the appropriately coded comments placed in the appropriate files. With computer storage, a program is needed to send portions of the total comment or letter to designated categories.

9. Prepare a report. When working with pieces of paper, a report can be prepared by simply pasting-up all the comments by category. Obviously this paste-up procedure limits the usefulness of Content Summary Analysis for large quantities of comments. Also, cross-comparisons by origin and affiliation can become cumbersome. A computer can simply print out all the comments stored in particular categories, and cross-comparisons are easy to make. Nevertheless if the number of comments is large, the report will be very thick.

Comments on Statistical Reports

It is often a good idea to accompany statistical displays with a narrative summary, for example: "a majority (61 percent) of interest group indicate support of the proposed action for these three reasons..." Many people, including not only the public but many decision-makers as well, are intimidated by statistical analyses and will understand the material in narrative form.

It is essential, however, that the narrative simply summarize the analysis rather than evaluate the comment. Content Summary Analysis strictly an analytical technique. Using it for evaluation will undermine its credibility.

Analyzing Public Comment for Underlying Values

Content Summary Analysis (and Codinvolve) concentrate on the content (arguments, facts, logic) of the comment or letter. Another important dimension of public comment is the values or underlying political philosophies expressed in the comment. Values are the yardsticks by which we judge things to be right or wrong, moral or immoral, fair or unfair, and so forth. While the content of people's views on a topic often changes in response to new information or dialogue with other groups, basic values positions are relatively permanent. As a result values are often a better long-term predictor of people's eventual positions than content.

The difficulty with analyzing values is that they are often implied rather than stated explicitly. This makes it more difficult to do an objective job of analysis, because the analyst must surmise the values, rather than dealing with explicit material. In addition, some letters will clearly contain only content, so it is impossible to record them in a values analysis. This can lead to charges of ignoring some letters or comments. As a result, the results of any values analysis can usually be reported only in qualitative terms and not quantitatively.

There are several indicators of implied values. These are:

☐ Values-laden language: "corporate rip-offs", "energy pigs", and so forth.

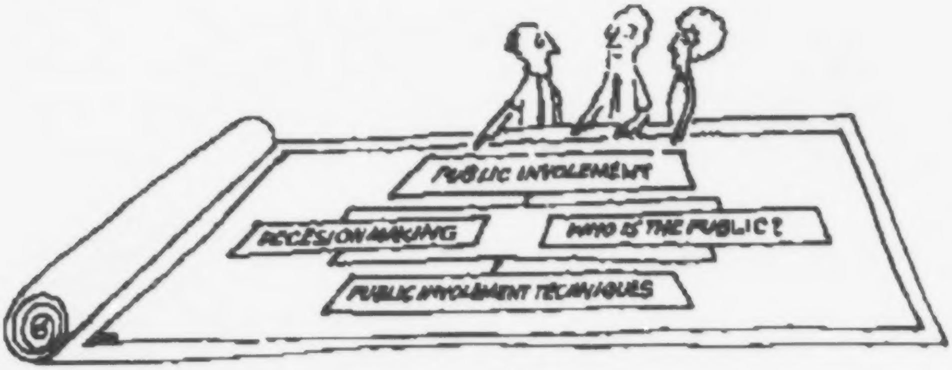
☐ Predicting dire consequences: "A working man won't be able to afford electricity"

❑ Characterizations of opponents: "hippie freaks", "yes men", or "rip-off artists".

❑ Quoting venerable sources: Quotes from the Bible, the Meech Lake Accord, leading thinkers or writers.

By looking for these indicators an analyst will often be able to come up with a reasonable estimate of people's values and beliefs based on a spoken or written comment. One of the best checks to ensure objectivity is to undertake a second analysis without knowledge of the results of the first. Any differences in interpretation would be worked out by discussion between the analysts.

Values comments could also be coded in the same way as content, with values categories set up in just the same way as content categories. Given the limitations of values analysis mentioned above, it would be more appropriate to store actual comments from the public in each category rather than to tally the number of responses in each category. This way management could be given the "flavor" of the values expressed, without any misleading claims to a statistically valid analysis.



CHAPTER 2

PUBLIC CONSULTATION TECHNIQUES

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Public meetings appear to be the simplest, most direct way of gaining contact with the public. All that seems needed is to hire a hall, send invitations, draw up an agenda, and show up. In reality, the public meeting is one of the most complex, unpredictable, and demanding situations, for these reasons:

☐ You only have one short chance to do things right. A mistake or false impression may not be changed easily, and can be made worse by a few angry people.

☐ Public meetings can be taken over by interest groups or individuals who want to air a favorite theme at length.

☐ Many people are afraid to speak in front of large groups. They may have important and positive things to say but will not say them at a meeting.

☐ Regardless of why the meeting was called, people may use it to talk about other things which are beyond your scope. It is hard to put aside issues if people are concerned about them.

☐ A lot may be going on in a community which affects how people react to your meeting announcement, your agenda items, your way of putting things, your timing of events, or your sense of what is important. People expect the person who called the meeting to know the local area and will be angry if they sense that you feel local issues are unimportant.

☐ Community leaders will feel that important issues may be raised at the meeting. They may worry about your impact on local government plans or political objectives.

☐ It is hard to know how many people will come, and therefore the facilities and services required.

All these problems can be lessened with careful research and preparation beforehand. Budget sufficient time and energy to do this.

Public Meeting Formats

There are numerous alternative formats for public meetings, depending on the purpose of the meeting, the size of the audience expected, and the level of interaction needed between participants. Among the major formats are:

- Briefing/Question and Answer
- Town Meeting
- Panel/Round Table
- Large Group/Small Group format

These meeting formats are discussed in Part 2, the "Dictionary of Techniques".

Know the Meeting Purpose

Selection of a format will depend upon what is to be accomplished with the meeting. By having a public meeting, you show openness and willingness to have the business done where it can be seen by everyone. While there are other ways of obtaining widespread consultation with the public, no forum is more important than the public meeting for giving everyone a chance to hear others' views and plans, and to get immediate clarification from each other. This aspect of exposure is fundamental to understanding the organization and conduct of public meetings.

Some of the reasons for public meetings are:

- to provide a forum to air concerns;
- to communicate plans, proposals, or decisions, along with background reasons, and to gather reactions;
-to seek views, preferences, or ideas;
-to give all parties a chance to hear from each other first hand;
-to present problems needing consideration by the community;
-to seek general agreement on ways of dealing with issues; and
-to share information.

It is common to expect too much from a public meeting. You might have too many agenda items to cover anything in depth, or you might be asking people to make complex analyses or decisions on the spot. The public meeting is useful for sharing information, but is not a good decision making arena. Except in very simple situations, the public meeting cannot qualify as a full public involvement program because it does not provide the extended thinking time necessary to deal with complex problems. Public meetings should rarely be used for long speeches from the sponsor. Such speeches lead to audience frustration, unless there are chances to ask questions or discuss issues.

Other techniques can also perform the same functions as a traditional a public meeting, with more "light" and less "heat". Be careful in selecting which technique to use.

Know the Audience

The other major factor in selecting a meeting format concerns the audience – its size, intensity of interest in the issue, familiarity with various types of meetings, and perceptions of the agency's credibility.

Audience Size: If an audience is very large, it becomes cumbersome to utilize small group processes. If the audience is broken up into small groups, for example, the logistics of providing flip charts, meeting rooms, etc. for all the small groups becomes very complex.

Intensity of Interest in the Issue: People who are very interested in a topic will probably be willing to utilize a structured process or other meeting format that encourages participation. If people are only moderately interested in the topic, a more passive format may be appropriate.

Familiarity with Meeting Formats: If leaders of the interests have participated in meetings where small group processes were used successfully, they will be more comfortable in using this kind of format again. Otherwise there may be discomfort with unorthodox meeting formats.

Agency Credibility: Whenever a meeting format is used that is substantially different from those familiar to the audience, agency credibility is on the line until it is demonstrated that this new format will be productive. In locations where the agency has substantial credibility, this may be no problem. Where the agency's credibility is already suspect, there may be resistance to an untraditional meeting format, even though it could be productive. In particular, an audience that is antagonistic to the proposed action or to the agency may see efforts to break into small groups as a "divide and conquer" tactic.

PUBLIC
MEETINGS
AND
WORKSHOPS

Seating Arrangements

Seating arrangements are a direct reflection of the type of meeting to be held and the relationship among participants. If agency staff are positioned at the front of the room, with the audience in rows, this seating arrangement establishes a relationship in which all participants talk to the meeting leaders at the front of the room, rather than to each other. This is appropriate for information giving, but not for interaction among participants. The potential for interaction is increased somewhat if the seating is semicircular, rather than in rows. The semicircular arrangement means there is some eye contact with others in the audience, which encourages interaction.

The ideal arrangement for interaction or consensus forming/negotiation is a circular arrangement, although this is sometimes limited by rectangular tables. In these cases the closest approximation to a circle is desirable. Not only does a circular arrangement establish eye contact between all participants, but it also removes any "head of the table," so everyone is equal in status. One approximation is the "hollow square of tables": 3 rows of chairs around a 15 ft. square will accommodate 100 people; sit four team members one on each side and citizens beside them to create an immediate conversational environment.

A typical banquet seating arrangement is a natural seating arrangement for a large group/small group meeting. People can turn to hear the opening presentation, then turn back to the people at their tables as the group with whom they will communicate. This means that the assignment to tables must create a random mix of people at each table, so that groups have a mix of opinions.

If the meeting is being held in a cafeteria, gymnasium or other large multipurpose room, it is possible to have two meeting set-ups: half the room is devoted to chairs in rows for the large group portion of the meeting, and the other half of the room is set around small tables for the small group discussion.

Time and Place of Meetings

Meetings should be held at a time and place convenient to the public, with the convenience of staff a secondary consideration. Usually this means that meetings will be held in the evenings, although meetings to be attended primarily by representatives of governmental entities or organized groups may be more convenient during the day.

One of the first considerations in selecting a meeting place is whether the facility can accommodate the desired meeting format and seating arrangement. It may also be better to have the meeting away from agency facilities, on "neutral" ground.

Other factors to consider in selecting a meeting place include:

-Location of the facility (central or outlying).
-Public transportation access.
-Space for parking.
-Safety of the area.
-Access for handicapped.

Preparation Checklist

-Conduct research phase.

-Check with local leaders and other potential participants to get a good understanding of local context and estimate of interest, explain what will be required from them.

-Prepare agenda and review it with other participants.

-Select location, time, and date.

-Publicize the meeting (press releases; newspaper notices; advertising; feature stories in the press; community organizations advertising and/or sponsoring the meetings)

-Prepare a background statement for the media so they have accurate information prior to the meeting.

-Advertise the meeting at least two to three weeks before, on the day before and on the day of the meeting.

-Ensure proper arrangements for seating, public address system, refreshments, access to the hall, projection screens, table for slide projector, displays, wall maps and charts, and the printing of agendas and other handouts.

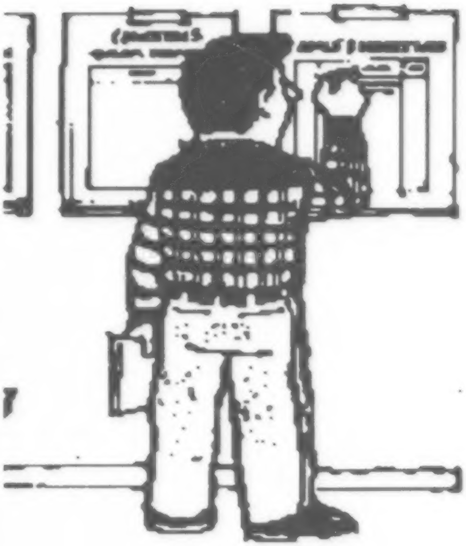
If using visual aids, be sure they are big enough and clear enough for the room size. *Remember, simplicity is the key in any graphics.* You can always talk around anything related to the graphics, however, it is really easy to turn off an audience totally if they can't see or understand your graphic presentation.

General Rules for Leading Meetings

The manner in which meetings are led is a major factor in their effectiveness. An ineffective leader can cause the public to believe that the meeting was poorly run and a waste of time, while an autocratic leader can create resentment and antagonism towards the agency.

An effective leader is one who is flexible enough to change formalistic meeting rules when appropriate, accepts comments from audience even though they may be emotionally laden, and conveys enthusiasm, sincerity and commitment for the public involvement process.

In many agencies the tradition has been that the highest ranking official of the agency leads the meeting. The advantage of this is that the public likes to know that its comments are being heard by someone high up in the agency. In addition, many top executives have good presence in front of an audience. The disadvantage is that it is harder for a top official to appear neutral. He or she may instead – under pressure – make commitments that should not be made. Also, antagonistic groups are more likely to try to use an attack against a high ranking official as a way of undermining the agency. One alternative is to have the highest ranking official open the meeting, say a few words of welcome, then turn the meeting over to a chairman. This makes it very clear that top management is as the meeting to hear the public's comments, but that the chairman's role is to establish and maintain a structure that works in everybody's interests, and is not just a role bestowed by virtue of rank. If top management's meeting leadership skills are very high, though, these skills may compensate for the risks run by having the top manager up in front of the meeting.



There are several basic principles to effective meeting leadership:

The participants "own" the meeting. The fundamental premise of effective meeting leadership is that of democracy itself: all power derives from the consent of the governed. Put another way: people accept meeting leadership because it is in their interest to do so. To accomplish anything in a meeting there must be some structure. Limits need to be set on topics, procedures must be established for recognition of speakers, and so forth. As long as the leader provides this structure in a manner that the participants consider equitable and reasonable, it is in their interest to cooperate. If challenged, the leader will usually be supported by the rest of the audience. However, if the structure is not considered equitable or reasonable, the leader's power is diminished and is subject to challenge.

Leading the process, not the content. The meeting leader should concentrate on providing an equitable meeting process and avoid assuming the role of an advocate or participant by commenting on the content of the meeting. If the agency needs someone to be the "expert" on the topic being discussed, this should be someone other than the meeting leader.

Avoid power symbols. Large numbers of experts, thousands of dollars of displays, or costly maps and graphics all communicate that the agency and the people leading the meeting are more important than the public. This can breed resentment and antagonism.

Guidelines for Conducting Large Meetings

A number of factors influence the effectiveness of large meetings:

Format: One of the first considerations in setting up a large meeting is the format of the meeting. Normally – except where legally required – the formalistic procedures of a public hearing should be avoided. The more formalistic the procedures are, the more people either feel intimidated by the procedures and will not speak, or feel resentful at having to "play the game by the agency's rules".

Just because a meeting begins with a large audience does not mean that it has to stay that way. Depending on the purpose of the meeting, it may be possible to break a large audience down into small work groups which either present brief verbal summaries at the end of the meeting, or hand in written reports. This approach can be effective if the purpose of the meeting is to collect information from the public, such as problem identification. If the topic of the meeting is very controversial, though, people may resist being broken up into small groups, claiming this is an effort to "divide and conquer". Under these circumstances people may want to hear how everybody feels, and efforts to use sophisticated meeting designs may be seen as an effort to manipulate the public.

If working groups are used, these general rules apply:

-the sub-group should have a prepared agenda;
-the sub-group should have a facilitator andminute recorder who know the task of the group;
-the sub-groups must report their results to the main meeting, so the underlying principle of exposure is not violated; and

-if a major job is expected of the sub-group, you should be running a workshop rather than holding a public meeting.

If a meeting is extremely controversial, it may be appropriate to meet with leaders of the various interests several weeks in advance to discuss the meeting format. If the key actors have been consulted regarding the meeting format, it is harder for groups to claim later that they have been abused.

Ground Rules: When going into a large meeting where strong antagonism is anticipated, there will be a need to set ground rules for participation. Examples are: time limits on speakers, the order in which speakers will be taken, limits on the topics to be discussed, etc. In a large meeting a ground rule such as a five minute time limit may be necessary to guarantee everybody a chance to speak; but such a time limit may be challenged by an organized group in an effort to win advantage for their position. The chairman of the meeting should explain the ground rules to the meeting participants and then give the reasons for using them. If it is possible, the chairman should meet with interest group leaders.

Increasing Participation: one of the disadvantages of large public meetings is that only a limited number of the public attending the meeting actually speak. The result is that the feelings of a number of attendees are never known. This problem can be minimized by providing a response form or hand-in workbook to everybody who attends a meeting, inviting their written comments. While not everybody will hand in a written comment, a significant percentage will, increasing confidence that the feelings and concerns of the total audience have been identified, not just those who speak.

Rules of Thumb for Public Meetings

-Plan the meeting to last no more than two-and-a-half to three hours

-Hand out a printed agenda at the meeting

-Introduce the person taking minutes, the government people, and the local leaders

-Arrange chairs so the chairperson can see everyone, but do not elevate the head table (if there is one)

-Use floor microphones for larger meetings so everyone can hear questions from participants, as well as answers from the chair

-Allow time to let participants speak without being cut off.

CHAIRING A PUBLIC MEETING

Conducting a public meeting is an art. It requires a balance of openness to meeting the needs of participants, as well as firmness in pursuing the agreed- upon agenda. If there is strong public concern over issues, the chair-person may be held in suspicion or openly challenged. A proposal to waive the prepared agenda may be made, or a speech by one person may alter the climate and make your aims untenable. Here are some guidelines for preparing to chair a meeting:

-Always check out the agenda with participants before starting (remain open to altering the agenda).

-Limit speakers only when necessary to give fair time to others (present time limits with this proviso).

-Never put down or ridicule a speaker who has annoyed or challenged you (courtesy is always necessary, especially when limiting a speaker or ruling someone out of order).

-When soliciting comments, look around the hall systematically and leave enough time for hesitant people to come forward before moving on.

-Treat all points of view as valid, and do not editorialize on what people present (you are a facilitator, not a judge).

-If people seem uncomfortable with the way things are going, ask for comments and deal with them directly. Sometimes a 'straw vote' helps clarify how an audience feels about an issue. For example, you may ask: "How many people feel we have given enough time for questioning the last speaker?"

-If the meeting is running long, you may have to choose between extending the time or re-convening another meeting. Sometimes an extended meeting is essential for a resolution; at other times it becomes a frustrating squabble as people become increasingly tired and distracted. It is preferable if the chairman makes the decision, explains the reasons, and asks for assent; avoid calling for a vote, as this can act as a precedent in other areas.

OPEN HOUSES

The Open House frequently replaces the public meeting as a consultative technique. Some practitioners feel that it is a more constructive vehicle than are public meetings. A greater number and diversity of interested people can obtain information and register their views.

General Guidelines

An Open House is an event at which citizens can drop in at a central facility during announced hours to view displays, ask questions, or discuss issues with agency staff.

The Open House is usually located in some valued local space, such as a room in a library, school or church; and runs from 2-9 p.m. so that it is accessible to mothers with small children, teenagers returning from school and adults, before or after supper. Visitors may come at any time and stay for as long as they like. (In some rural areas in winter 1- 6 p.m. works best.)

A series of display panels, arranged on easels in a rough circle, present the purpose of the project, the study team, various aspects of the issues, evaluation criteria, alternative solutions, etc. Often a diagram on one panel is followed by a short text explanation on the next so the visitor can obtain a grasp of the whole project without being led by the hand and talked at.

An automatic slide presentation on a small cube with a 3-5 minute cycle is useful to present visual aspects of the subject. Note – if chairs are provided, occupants will inhibit the desired flow.

A table with hand-out material is usually provided. Coffee and doughnuts or sandwiches should be available, preferably by contracting with a local group. The primary character of an Open House is a free-flowing conversation directed by the visitors. People can come whenever they wish, stay as long as they wish, and address whatever topics interest them in whatever order they choose. As a result, the staff talk with a larger number and broader cross-section of the population than happens in the typical public meeting. The quality of the exchanges is usually much higher; the participants pose thoughtful questions and wrestle with alternative solutions. In many cases, problems can not only be raised but actually resolved, unlike what usually occurs in a public meeting.

An open house can be effectively combined with a public meeting or other activities. For example, an all day open house might be followed by a public meeting held the same evening. The open house would provide information to the public, then in the evening the public could give reactions back to the agency.

A variation on the open house is to invite interest groups to set up booths, so that citizens can walk around the room and get a sampling of the opinions of all the major actors. In several cases the open house has even been expanded into a "fair", with recreational and social activities part of the program, along with food and beverages.

Feedback

The systematic gathering of informed public response is a vital feature of the Open House. Staff, wearing name tags which also indicate their subject matter, carry pads of Open House record forms (see sample) on which to record individual comments, concerns, questions and suggestions. Where staff cannot provide immediate answers, they note the name, address and phone number for later follow-up. Visitors are most appreciative when staff undertake to refer questions or concerns which are not part of their project to the relevant organizations.

While an Open House is free to enter, visitors must pay to get out – by completing a short exit check list! This generates quantitative data such as weights on evaluative factors or ranking of alternatives. Background data obtained, such as geographic location or occupation, enables cross-tabulation.

Staffing

Staffing can usually be lighter during the day than in the evening. It is important to manage so as to avoid overcrowding. An Open House held from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. may readily deteriorate into a regular public meeting, in contrast to one held from 2:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. which is unlikely to do so.

In one recent case, 250 people attended an Open House from 2-9 p.m. Two staff were present from 2-6:30 and four for the evening. Some 30 Open House record forms and 130 exit check lists were completed. The staff were able to interpret the project appropriately to housewives, environmentalists and businessman.

When staff are preparing Open House panels, it is important that these are informative rather than persuasive and informal rather than formal. Finished graphics have a non-verbal message that additional suggestions are too late.

The Open House is a powerful learning and problem-solving device which is readily adapted to most planning projects and the characteristics of most of the participants. It typically attracts a larger number of people and a broader cross-section of the community than the typical public meeting.

Preceding Publication

An Open House is designed to follow 7-10 days after a publication has provided people with the basic information on the subject and an opportunity to reply with little effort. This could be a display advertisement or tabloid insert in the local newspaper with a tear-off coupon or a brochure, distributed by householder mail, with a reply paid postcard.

During the incubation period following the publication, people have an opportunity to follow media coverage of the issues, discuss it with neighbours and become more prepared to make the best use of the Open House.

Staff Training

As a minimum, staff should gather to identify probable questions and establish brief, correct and consistent responses to them before the Open House.

Prior to a set of Open Houses dealing with one very controversial project, the staff reviewed some 30 probable questions and role-played their responses as if each were asked (a) by an interested housewife, (b) a high school science teacher, (c) an older farmer and (d) an angry environmentalist. An assertiveness training film "When I Say No I Feel Guilty" (International Telefilms) was also used with considerable value.

Follow-up

After one or more Open Houses, it is important to:

1. Have a debriefing meeting with the staff to obtain their reactions, insights and suggestions for improvements at future events.

2. Analyze the response and make it available (a) to the planning team and (b) to the local media in a news release so residents will know the sentiments of the community at large.

Pages 42-44 are excerpted with permission from Connor, Desmond M., "The Open House" in Constructive Citizen Participation: A Resource Book, Development Press, Victoria, B.C., Revised edition, 1988, pp. II 14-15.

3. Get back answers to questions recorded at the Open House and forward requests for action by other organizations.

WORKSHOPS

Workshops are extended public meetings in which participants are engaged in review of information, detailed definition of issues, problem solving, or plan review. Workshops are expected to produce results, as well as being forums for educational materials.

Workshops are useful when dealing with complex topics where the public needs briefing on technical matters, as well as time for detailed consideration. Workshops can be used at many stages of a public involvement program. A workshop is particularly useful as a method for detailed public review more expeditious than the extended involvement methods.

Some uses of the workshop format could include:

-selecting a public involvement program from among various options.
-reviewing a plan, or developing a single mutually acceptable plan.
-defining issues or problems, possibly in rank order.
-developing alternative solutions to a specific problem.
-reviewing the operational results of a plan which has been implemented.
-presenting a technical study and reviewing its implications.
-developing terms of reference for studies.
-developing a list of the critical impacts that must be considered in evaluating alternatives.

Selection of Participants

The optimum size for group effectiveness is 5-7 people. The need to have all interests represented, however, usually means that most small group meetings will have as many as 20-25 participants. Even with larger numbers, however, some people may feel excluded. Some of the methods which can be used to prevent this problem include:

Repeat Meetings. A meeting format can be developed which can be repeated as often as necessary, allowing opportunities for everyone who wishes to participate to go through the same experience.

Daytime Meeting/Evening Meeting. One approach to the problem of people feeling excluded is to conduct the workshop during the day, followed by an evening meeting at which everybody gets a chance to review the product generate during the day. Attendance at the small group meeting would be designed to ensure that the full range of values within the community is represented.

Interest Group Selection. An alternative method is for agency staff to conduct a careful analysis and identify the interests that need to be represented. Through consultation with the interests, agency staff would then identify those people whom the interests feel could best represent them.

Steps in Designing a Workshop

The following steps are useful in designing a workshop or small group meeting:

1) Identify the Desired Product. Identify precisely what the product is that should result from the meeting, such as a set of alternatives, a list of impacts to be evaluated, and so forth.

2) Identify the resource information that the public will need. Identify what information the participants will need in order to complete the desired product. This information should be written in simple, understandable, layman's language, and presented in a format which makes it easy to find and grasp, so that the least amount of meeting time is spent locating needed information. This material might be incorporated in a small workbook which contains group or team assignments, exercise instructions, resource materials, and any hand-in response forms.

3) Select or design a series of activities which will result in the desired product. In some cases there may be previously used meeting formats which will result in the desired product. If not, design a set of activities which will produce the needed materials. The usual technique is to write simple, clear instructions for group activities and give the groups substantial responsibility both in how the activity is completed and the product which is produced. The series of activities could incorporate small group processes such as Brainstorming, or Nominal Group Process.

4) Design a simple mechanism for evaluating the product. Once participants have worked together there is still a need for them to evaluate what they have accomplished or to place some priority on what they think is most significant. Without an opportunity to evaluate, participants may feel restricted by the meeting format or feel that all points covered during the meeting are receiving equal weight. This evaluation mechanism could be a hand-in response form or a straw vote or weighted vote to establish priorities.

Using Small Group Processes

A number of small group processes are designed to improve group effectiveness in one way or another. Two of these are described in Chapter 15 of the manual.

Brainstorming. Brainstorming is a technique for increasing the number and creativity of ideas expressed in a group. It is an effective means of developing a lot of ideas in a hurry, but does not help in evaluating those ideas.

Nominal Group Process. Nominal Group Process is a technique to help groups generate and prioritize a large number of ideas. It has also been successfully used for consensus formation. Nominal Group Process is based on research suggesting that people generate more ideas working by themselves, but in the presence of others.

General Rules

Many of the problems with preparing a public meeting apply to workshops; however workshops are more structured and less likely to go "off the rails". Here is a checklist for preparation:

Follow the **"preparation checklist"** for a public meeting:

-Vary the agenda between general presentations to the assembled participants and small group working sessions with from seven to 15 participants.

-Ensure there are fully briefed facilitators for each working sub-group. Finding experienced facilitators is often difficult; ask your local service club for assistance.

-Supply all sub-groups with instructions, agenda, tools, documents, and work space.

-Have a coordinator visit each sub-group to answer questions and keep contact with what is happening.

-Ask each sub-group to record their results on a blackboard or flip charts and to present them when called back into general session.

-Arrange for publication of a workshop summary for circulation to all participants.

-Hold a post-mortem to assess workshop results and decide on any further action.

CHAPTER 3

EXTENDED INVOLVEMENT

ADVISORY GROUPS

One of the most frequently used public involvement techniques is the establishment of an advisory group, a relatively small group of people who represent various interests, points of view, or fields of expertise, to advise the agency on proposed actions or a specific proposal.

Advisory groups can:

☐ Help set study priorities, or help "scope" the study.
☐ Review technical data and make recommendations regarding its adequacy.
☐ Help resolve conflicts between various interests.
☐ Help design and evaluate the public involvement program.
☐ Serve as a communication link between the agency and other interests and agencies.
☐ Review and make recommendations concerning the decision making process.
☐ Assist in developing and evaluating alternatives.
☐ Help select consultants acceptable to the public.
☐ Review and make recommendations regarding the study budget.
☐ Review written material prior to release to the general public.
☐ Help host and participate in public meetings.
☐ Assist in educating the public about the proposed action and the decision making process.

Advisory groups are effective because:

1. They provide a cross sampling of public views and concerns.

2. Members of the group have a chance to become informed about the issues before coming to conclusions, and have a better understanding of the consequences of decisions. The result is that their counsel to management combines a citizens' perspective with a thorough understanding of the situation.

3. Because personal relationships are developed in the group, members of the group develop a deeper understanding of the concerns of the other interests, and

establish relationships which serve as a moderating influence on more extreme views.

4. Advisory groups can serve as a communication link back to the constituencies they represent, and advisory groups may be able to reach a consensus among conflicting groups.

Guidelines for Establishing an Advisory Group

There are several general principles that should be observed in establishing advisory groups:

❑ An advisory group must represent the full range of interests and values of the interested publics. An advisory group that represents only interests that have traditionally supported agency activities misleads the agency andundermines the credibility of the entire public involvement effort. To be effective, an advisory group must provide representation for all groups that see themselves as potentially affected by the proposed action.

❑ The group's role in decision making must be clearly defined. Confusion about the role of the advisory group, coupled with the natural desire on the part of the members to exercise maximum influence on the outcome, can be a source of problems. This problem can be avoided if there is a candid discussion of the group's role in decision making at the outset. A written mandate which carefully outlines exactly what is expected of the group and project time lines is helpful.

❑ Normally the life of the group – or at least the terms of the group's members – should be limited. The longer a group exists, the more likely it is to become an elite. Public advisory committees have a tendency to outlive their usefulness, and so the group's purpose, as well as the members' tenure, should be monitored. Most public involvement comes from issues which have a direct effect on groups or individuals.

Once those issues are resolved, the original participants lose interest in attending meetings. Sometimes a group's purpose is still valid, but the danger exists of appearing to co-opt potential adversaries. This can be resolved through regular change in representation.

❑ Efforts should be made to insure that members of the advisory group maintain regular communication with the constituencies they are supposed to represent. Group members should inform their constituencies through briefings, organizational newsletters, public meetings, or occasional interviews or discussion with other leaders from their constituency. This will ensure that the representative reflects the views of the constituency, and that the group is educated along with the representative.

☐ Agency participation should include line managers. It is extremely important that responsible line managers interact with the advisory group, both so the group feels that it is being heard by people with genuine authority, and so that managers hear public concerns firsthand.

☐ Agency representatives must speak the public's language when working with advisory groups. This is essential to communicate effectively, but is no simple task; it requires the ability to simplify technical language and jargon without appearing to be patronizing.

☐ The agency must be prepared to provide time and logistic support commitment.

Selecting Advisory Group Members

In an informal advisory group questions of membership will be low priority since membership may be changing constantly. But in a formal advisory group, it is crucial to use a technique for selecting members which ensures that the group is representative of all the interests.

While there are always many voices in a community, there are usually only a few clear categories of public interest. When you want representation from a community, it is often better to draw members from among those who identify with a particular interest category, rather than a particular organized group.

There are two reasons for this. Firstly, this approach gives a comprehensive but manageable group. Secondly, it ensures that even with small numbers, no important set of public values is unrepresented.

There are five basic methods for selecting advisory group members:

1) Members can be selected by the agency with an effort to balance the different interests. This is by far the most frequently used technique, but on very controversial issues runs the risk that the public will believe the agency has established the group to support its position.

The danger that the public will see the membership as biased can be reduced if affected interest groups and agencies are consulted prior to selecting the members and the selections clearly reflect this consultation process.

2) The selection of the advisory group can be turned over to a third party or group. Depending on how localized the issue is, the selection process could be turned over to a local elected body, a community leader or politician, a public involvement consultant, or to a small group representing the major interests who in turn select other members.

3) The agency can determine the interest groups it wishes to have represented and allow the groups to select their own representatives. This can create problems for volunteer groups, which sometimes have difficulty coordinating among themselves to select a representative. However, it eliminates the risk of being seen as "stacking the deck".

4) Use any of the three methods above and augment the membership with volunteers. This allows the different interests to adjust the membership of the group by obtaining volunteers from their ranks. If the advisory group will vote on issues, though, this method permits the various groups to "stack the deck" by adding a large number of additional volunteers.

5) Membership can be determined by a popular election. This last method has been used only in a few cases where there was some existing structure for selecting representatives, such as neighborhood councils.

Establishing Procedures for Advisory Group Meetings

Balance of public interest in working groups does not guarantee harmony, effective compromise, or acceptable results. Balanced membership does give the group initial credibility. When the work begins, continued credibility depends on:

-the quality of group process
-clear commitment from the government agency to support technical andinformation needs of the group
-participants levelling with their colleagues
-good communications with the wider public

There are a number of procedural issues which normally have to be settled at some point with groups that will be working together for some time.

An advisory group may choose to devote its first meetings to agreeing on procedures, although protracted debate can seriously undermine enthusiasm. It may be advisable to prepare and pre-circulate a draft of proposed guidelines for revision and adoption by the advisory group.

Voting. Probably the single most important procedural decision is whether or not subsequent decisions will be made by voting.

Most groups in Canada are used to voting on issues and assume automatically that this is the right way to make decisions. However there are several reasons why voting is usually not the best way for advisory groups to make a decision.

First, despite efforts to make the advisory group broadly representative, there is no guarantee that representation of interests on the advisory group is proportionate to those interests among the public at large. A vote may merely reflect an imbalance in the composition of a group rather than a view of the majority of the public.

If the objective is to work towards some sort of consensus outcome, a badly divided group serves little purpose. Only if there is some kind of consensus is the advisory group likely to have much impact on either the public at large or agency decision makers. A split vote simply means there is a continuing disagreement, which could have been determined without an advisory group.

An alternative to voting is to obtain a "sense of the meeting". The meeting leader listens carefully until there appears to be a consensus, states this as his or her "sense of the meeting", and checks to see if it is acceptable to the group. This approach requires a good sense of timing, the ability to summarize effectively, and a credible leader. If it is impossible to reach agreement on the sense of a meeting, the meeting leader asks the group how to resolve the controversy. One possibility is to keep talking. Another is to vote. Another is to have majority and minority reports. Still another is to obtain agreement on procedures for resolving the key factual issues that prevent resolution. Finally, it may be best to drop consideration of an issue until the next meeting, giving people a chance to think about the issue more.

Attendance. Some groups wish to establish minimum attendance requirements for membership, eg. a member who is absent more than a certain number of times is dropped from the group.

Alternates. Another issue related to attendance is whether or not members can send alternates to participate in meetings. This can be a problem if the group has decided to make decisions by a majority vote. But if voting rights are not involved, then sending alternates is one way to keep everybody informed. If alternates are not kept informed of what occurred at previous meetings, however, it is very frustrating to the regular members.

Participation of Observers. A ground rule may need to be established concerning observers, eg. if they are welcome at group meetings and, if so, whether and when they may speak.

Subcommittees. It may be necessary to establish subcommittees to accomplish specific work tasks. If so, the responsibilities and authorities of the subcommittees should be clearly defined.

Confidentiality of Materials. If the group will be reviewing documents that will undergo substantial modification before being made public, rules may be required to govern the confidentiality of these materials. Many experienced public involvement practitioners simply assumed that anything turned over to advisory groups, regardless of requests for confidentiality, is now a public document.

Constituencies. Specific mechanisms may need to be set up to ensure regular communication with constituencies being represented by group members.

Parliamentary Procedures. Formal parliamentary procedures, such as "Robert's Rules of Order", assume an adversarial position among the participants, and also assume that issues will be resolved by voting rather than consensus. For this reason, it is advisable to minimize the use of formal meeting procedures. If the group leader has the trust of the group, it is usually possible to get things done more readily without the use of complicated meeting procedures.

Group Member Expenses. It should be established right at the beginning whether travel expenses and other costs related to participation in the group will be borne by the agency or by individual members. In the event they will be borne by the agency, the rules for expense reimbursement should be clearly defined.

CONCENSUS GUIDELINES

One way of getting working compromises is to make decisions by concensus. A decision reached by concensus is an agreement where all parties accept a balance of gains and losses to achieve a single result. If the parties start from very different positions, concensus-seeking may take much longer than a simpler 'majority rules' approach. The results, however, are more likely to be used and to be more durable in practice. The following guidelines will assist working groups to achieve concensus:

☐ Take time in the beginning of the group's life for members to meet other members as colleagues, rather than as antagonists across a negotiation table. This may require field trips, guest speakers, or other common activities where resource issues are looked at in general.

☐ Have each member write a short statement of what they wish to achieve through the group's work, then discuss these expectations in an information sharing meeting.

☐ Ensure each member understands the group's final terms of reference, and the kinds of results consistent with those terms.

☐ Before trying to address issues, make sure that there is a clear and satisfactory statement of what the issues are.

☐ When proposals for a decision are being made, seek a number of options, rather than trying to draft a single statement. The options must embody the differing viewpoints of participants. They can then be examined by everyone for pros and cons.

☐ When different viewpoints or options are presented, take the time to hear each participant, without judging or condemning the proposal at first hearing. Most communication gaps begin with problems in listening, and unwillingness to let a speaker make his point.

☐ Everyone must be willing to re-open issues or concerns already decided, if a new compromise changes the way a member perceives the balance of interests taking shape. Tolerance for this review must be balanced by a respect for the group's work by each member.

☐ Concensus cannot survive if any members of the group are working to a hidden agenda or manipulative strategy. Concerns have to be explicit and all cards must be placed on the table.

☐ Sometimes, compromise is not acceptable to one or more of the participants in a working group. In these cases, it may not be possible to achieve concensus on a single proposal. The remedy for this situation is to present either a minority report, or to present a range of alternatives. With either approach, it is essential to give reasons for the alternatives, so that they can be assessed by the agency. It should be remembered that the closer to concensus a working group can get, the more likely it is that their recommendations will be accepted and implemented.

Scheduling Meetings. One of the issues that haunts every advisory group is whether to have regular group meetings or schedule them as needed. If meetings are called only when needed, it is difficult to notify members of each meeting and there are often scheduling conflicts. On the other hand there is no surer way to discourage interest and participation in an advisory group than to hold regular meetings that are unproductive or seem to have no purpose.

Staffing. Often advisory groups raise questions which require considerable study or follow-through. One important question that needs to be answered early is the level of staffing which will be provided to the group, and for what purposes.

Minutes. Agency staff are normally responsible for keeping the record of group meetings, but if there is a history of suspicion or mistrust, the group may want to assume this responsibility.

External Consultants. If advisory group members are suspicious of agency staff, there may be requests for external consultants who will assist the advisory group in reviewing highly technical plans or reports. External consultants are sometimes more credible to the advisory group than are agency technical staff.

Resolving issues such as these in the first few meetings can prevent hard feelings at a later date.

CHAIRING EXTENDED INVOLVEMENT GROUPS

The chairperson of a working group is responsible for assisting the process of group discussion and decision making. This role can only be managed if the person is either disinterested in the outcome of the work, or is capable of separating the function of the chair from advocacy of a particular position. A chairperson must be a competent and objective facilitator, and must have the confidence of the entire group. In many conflicts, the various participants begin the process with suspicions about each other. This decreases with time, through the offices of an even-handed chair-person. To achieve initial acceptance of the chairperson, you may need a community member from outside the group to chair the working sessions, as a community service. People willing to act in this capacity may be sought form educational institutions, service clubs, the clergy, or various professions where group facilitation skills are provided by training and experience.

Guidelines for the Chairperson

Your role is to assist members in achieving results by ensuring fair and complete participation in the events at hand, and ensuring that the group focuses on the issues.

☐ Develop agendas in advance and check them with the group before proceeding at any meeting. Change agendas to meet emergent needs only after gaining approval of the group.

☐ Have a common set of rules of procedure.

☐ Agree on who shall speak for the group to outside parties, especially to the media.

☐ Arrange for regular minutes which distinguish records of discussion from decisions, and action requiring follow-up by a group member.

☐ From time to time, review the terms of reference and objectives of the group to assess progress. If necessary, remind the participants of the time constraints.

☐ If you must speak for an interest, vacate the chair for a brief period, handing it over to someone else while you make your comments.

☐ If you feel a personal conflict of interest arising, state the problem clearly to the group and ask for guidance. Maintaining group confidence of your impartiality is essential to continued progress.

☐ If, as chairperson, you have reacted to an outside request for information or attended a meeting in which the group's work was discussed, report this to the group at the next available opportunity. If you have the chance, let several group members know by telephone prior to the event, to find out their reaction. Sometimes you may have to refuse an outside discussion, without first checking with the group. This will likely be required in the early stages of the group's work, but is less likely to be a problem later.

The working group's productivity and its relationship with the wider public is generally improved if you arrange for regular public reporting, both to the media and through publication of interim reports.

PART 2

DICTIONARY OF TECHNIQUES

Part 2 outlines an extensive catalogue of both traditional and less traditional public involvement techniques. The techniques included are listed in Table 2. The directory is organized according to the five areas described earlier:

- ☐ Public information/ education
- ☐ Information feedback
- ☐ Consultation
- ☐ Extended involvement
- ☐ Joint planning

For each technique, the following topics are discussed:

1) a brief description;
2) advantages andusefulness;
3) limitations or problems.

For techniques for which there is not a large body of experience, advantages and disadvantages are not always presented.

This volume of the manual provides a description of techniques, but does not provide guidance on how to put these various techniques together into a coordinated program. Guidance on program design is contained in Volume 2 of the manual, which should be read before attempting to design a public involvement program.

The techniques are presented in the directory in the order shown in Table 2, The approach which the technique most typically falls within is described by an "x". **It must be emphasized, however, that a technique can frequently be employed in a public involvement program based on one of the other approaches.**

The index from the front of this document is replicated here to assist the reader in locating specific methodologies. An alphabetical listing of all techniques can be found in the index.

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Table 2
Public Involvement Techniques

	Public Information	Information Feedback	Consultation	Extended Involvement	Joint Planning
Public Information					
Advertising	X				
Brochures	X				
Citizen Training Programs	X				
Contests/Events	X				
Direct Mail	X				
Exhibits/Displays	X				
News Conferences	X				
Newsletters	X				
Newspaper Inserts	X				
News Releases	X				
Position Papers	X				
Political Preview	X				
Publications	X				
Publicity	X				
Public Service Announcements	X				
Reports	X				
Public information Feedback					
Analyzing Public Involvement Data		X			
Briefs		X			
Community or Social Profiles		X			
Computer Assisted Participation		X	X		
Content Analysis		X			
Focus Groups		X	X		
Interviews		X	X		
Policy Profiling		X			
Polls		X			
Questionnaires		X			
Surveys		X			
Written Submissions		X			
Consultation					
Brainstorming			X		
Coffee Klatches			X		
Conferences		X	X		
Delphi		X	X		
Dialogues			X		
Field Offices	X	X	X		
Large Meetings			X		
Nominal Group Process		X	X		
Open Houses	X	X	X		

Table 2 cont'd
Public Involvement Techniques

	Public Information	Information Feedback	Consultation	Extended Involvement	Joint Planning
Panels	X	X	X		
Participatory Television		X	X		
Phone Lines	X	X	X		
Public Meetings	X	X	X		
Simulation Games		X	X	X	
Technical Assistance	X	X	X	X	
Town Meetings		X	X		
Trade-off Games		X	X	X	X
Workshops			X	X	X
Extended Involvement					
Advisory Committees			X	X	
Charrettes			X	X	
Task Forces			X	X	
Joint Planning					
Arbitration				X	X
Collaborative Problem Solving				X	X
Conciliation				X	X
Mediation				X	X
Negotiation				X	X
Niagara Process				X	X

PUBLIC INFORMATION TECHNIQUES

ADVERTISING

Public involvement programs which are newsworthy are often able to obtain considerable free publicity (See News Conferences, News Releases, Publicity and Public Service Announcements). However there are times when paid advertising is a useful adjunct to the publicity program. Examples of uses of paid advertising include:

☐ An announcement of a public meeting or other public involvement activity.

☐ A weekly question and answer column regarding a proposed project.

☐ An overall description of a project and its impacts.

☐ A description of agency efforts to solve problems which have been identified as public concerns.

☐ A clip-out coupon for people wanting more information about a decision making process.

☐ Advocacy advertising, to clearly communicate the agency's position on an issue. "If you want it said right, say it yourself". (Globe and Mail Brochure)

The effectiveness of advertising rests substantially on how well it is prepared. The most important thing is to establish a clear image of the kind of people to be reached. Many people depend solely upon television for their news and information, but often these are not the people who are likely to be active in public involvement programs. The selection of appropriate media is tied to the kind of people that need to be reached. Cablevision is easy to access because of CRTC regulations about community programming; some inexpensive "teaser" advertisements in other media can greatly increase the viewing audience of cable.

One word of caution: in small communities where radio, television and newspapers are all struggling and all competing for the same advertising dollar, there can be ill-feeling if all the advertising goes to one media. If, for example, all the advertising dollars go to the local newspaper, the radio station may feel less cooperative about providing free public service announcements. It is necessary to spread the advertising budget around, to ensure that no one feels offended and cuts off the free publicity.

A different philosophy prevails in larger cities where the advertising departments and news departments are kept separate. In this circumstance the editorial department is usually not aware of whether or not advertising has been bought, and will not consider this relevant in deciding the newsworthiness of a story. In fact a newsperson is likely to be offended by the suggestion that free publicity is "owed" because of all the advertising the company buys from the newspaper.

Advantages of Advertising

The primary advantage of paid advertising is that the agency can communicate its message just the way it wants. With free publicity, the media will provide its own slant and interpretation based on what they think is most newsworthy. This may or may not provide complete information, and may not have the emphasis desired by the agency. With a paid advertisement, the agency is in charge of the material, and the manner in which it is presented.

Advertisements reach a wide range of publics, including people who would otherwise not know about the program and who would be unlikely to participate in other kinds of public involvement activities.

While advertisements are primarily a way of informing the public, rather than getting information back from it, it is possible to include clip-out coupons or questionnaires as a way of getting public response.

Limitations of Advertisements

The primary limitation of advertisements is that they may be perceived by the public as an attempt to "buy" goodwill. Everybody knows that advertisements cost money, so the perception can develop that the agency is spending large sums of taxpayers' money in an effort to push its point of view. The expenditure of funds for advertising to push a point of view is particularly offensive from a government agency. Opponents of the agency's proposed actions may seize on the expenditure of advertising money as an issue to use against the agency.

For this reason considerable caution should be exercised in spending large sums of money on advertising. Advertisements announcing upcoming meetings are likely to be appreciated, rather than criticized. But frequent full page or prime time advertisements are likely to be criticized, although this depends on their tone and content, and the overall context. If the tone is "hard sell", then criticism is almost guaranteed. But if the tone is objective and factual, recognizing some of the problems that may be associated with the agency's proposed actions, then people will be slower to criticize.

BROCHURES

Brochures are usually a brief summary of the study or proposed action(s), the issues involved, and the opportunities for public involvement. Typically, the purpose in issuing a brochure is to reach additional publics or inform known publics of the public involvement program, or a new phase of a study or decision making process.

The usefulness of a brochure depends on its ability to attract interest; therefore, visual appeal and the way in which it is written are extremely important. However, it is equally essential that a brochure be written objectively and not attempt to "sell" the agency position.

If the brochure is printed on light cardstock, it may include a detachable reply-paid postcard addressed to the project soliciting comments, questions and suggestions. Remember, you pay only for the cards returned; you need a permit number for Canada Post. Often some 85 percent of the respondents will add their names, addresses and other identifying information if asked. You can then sort the replies by geographic area, occupation etc.

Advantages of Brochures

Brochures are a direct means of providing a large amount of information to many people in a relatively economical manner. They save staff time which would be involved in repeating the same information to a number of people. Brochures also document agency efforts to obtain public involvement.

Limitations of Brochures

Preparation and approval of a brochure can be time-consuming (although less time-consuming than repeating the same information to a number of people).

CITIZEN TRAINING PROGRAMS

Training programs for citizens may be conducted to provide them with enough technical background so that they can participate more effectively,

BROCHURES

CITIZEN TRAINING PROGRAMS

and will feel more equal in relationship to agency staff. They may also be conducted to help citizens work together more effectively. Finally, they may be conducted to teach citizens about a topic (such as conservation techniques) in order that they can subsequently train others.

Examples of Citizen Training Programs :

-A citizen advisory group received extensive training in utility operations in order to make recommendations on electric rate policies and standards.

-An advisory group received training in communication skills and meeting leadership in order to work together more effectively.

- Citizens were invited to attend all-day training sessions on energy conservation as part of an effort to come up with a community energy conservation plan.

- Citizen group leaders were taught facilitation skills to lead small groups during public meetings.

Training can be accomplished formally through seminars, workshops, or lectures or it can be conducted informally through simulation games, roundtable discussions, "brown bag" lunches, publications or audiovisual materials.

Advantages of Citizen Training Programs

Training can increase the effectiveness and impact of public contributions to the decision making process. Also, after receiving training, citizens may feel less intimidated by technical staff and other agency officials. The result can be that they react less defensively, are able to make suggestions in a manner which is more understandable to technical people, and express their concerns more openly.

When properly trained, citizens may also work together more effectively, and can assist in conducting the public involvement program.

Disadvantages of Citizen Training Programs

Some citizens may resent the suggestion that they need training or may question the agency's intent to conduct an objective training program.

Training usually must be limited to a small group. This presents no problem if the training is being given to an established advisory group. But if the training is being offered to the general public it raises the problem of selecting participants.

CONTESTS/ EVENTS
DIRECT MAIL

CONTESTS/EVENTS

One way to stimulate interest in a topic or gain publicity is to stage a contest or other event. Usually the contest or event is clearly related to the topic of the public involvement program.

Examples of contests or events include:

-An essay or poster contest for school children on environment related topics.

-A fair for displaying energy conservation ideas and devices.

-An award for excellence in community planning.

In many cases these awards or events will be newsworthy locally, and will catch the attention of the local media for the entire public involvement program. Media attention, in turn, can help increase participation in other public involvement activities. In fact, a contest or other event is best planned to provide publicity for subsequent workshops, public meetings, or advisory group participation. This way the public is not disappointed by having its interest aroused, but finding no way to express this interest.

Advantages of Contests/ Events

Contests or events can gain publicity for the entire public involvement program, and can also help to draw out those people interested in a particular topic or issue.

Limitations of Contests/ Events

Participation in the contest or event may not generate public comment that is directly applicable to the decision making process at hand.

Unless the contests or events lead directly into other public involvement activities, they arouse interest and create expectations for continuing participation which can lead to resentment if no further opportunities for participation are provided.

DIRECT MAIL

Direct mail is one way of informing every household in a geographic area about a project or program. Through the postal service, flyers and newsletters can be delivered to areas as small as a single letter carrier route at a third class bulk rate.

Advantages

Direct mail ensures that every single household in an area is informed about the project, and so is useful to those situations where complete coverage is desired.

Limitations

Direct mail can be costly, especially for projects where a large number of households must be informed but the percentage interested in the issue is likely to be small. Flyers and newsletters can easily be lost with other "junk mail", so they need to be well designed for public appeal.

EXHIBITS/DISPLAYS

One techniques that has been frequently used to inform the general public of a public involvement program or to obtain comment from the public is to set up exhibits or displays in such places as shopping centers.

Exhibits may be particularly useful in reaching publics that had not previously been interested in the issue, so were unlikely to participate in public involvement activities. Exhibits and displays also serve an educational purpose even when people choose not to participate. Exhibits should be coordinated with other public involvement activities so that people who indicate an interest as a result of seeing an exhibit can be informed of other ways they can participate.

The nature of the exhibit is particularly important. A fixed exhibit, which provides general information but does not require staff presence, usually generates less interest than a staffed booth at which some activity is taking place. This is particularly true in situations where there are numerous other exhibits or booths. Some of the things which have been done to spark additional interest include:

-Comments from people who visited the booth were videotaped and played to passersby, who were also invited to make comments.

-Comments from the public were recorded on flip charts and displayed where everybody could read them.

-Response forms were provided so that passersby could write comments regarding issues addressed in the display.

Advantages of Exhibits/ Displays

Exhibits/displays provide information to the general public about issues important to the agency. They also reach people who do not ordinarily participate in public involvement programs, and may get them interested in future participation.

Disadvantages of Exhibits/Displays

A staffed booths requires a major commitment of staff time.

An exhibit that is not coordinated with other public involvement activities may arouse interest without providing any method for follow-up.

NEWS CONFERENCES

Whenever there is a major story to make available to the media – such as announcement of a controversial decision – a news conference is one way to get additional interest and involvement from the media for the story.

The normal news conference consists of a brief statement by an agency official followed by questions from the media. The statement will usually be videotaped for television coverage, as will be some of the questions and answers. Both the spokes- person's statement, as well as general background on the issue, should be printed and distributed to the media. This will assist the media and protect against misquotes.

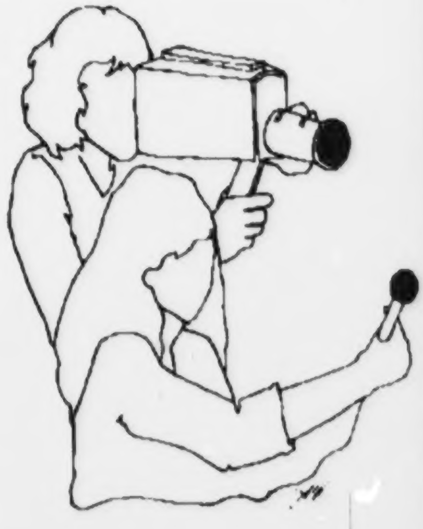
News conferences are only effective when there is a major story. A reporter is under tight time pressure, and it takes time to get to the news conference, set up (if television), record the event, and get back to his or her office. In the same time several other stories could be produced. What the news conference does offer, if the story is newsworthy, is actual quotes or footage of the announcement, plus an opportunity to ask questions.

When holding a news conference to announce a story which could affect a local community or neighborhood, it is advisable to consult with local community leaders in advance in order to identify any sensitivities and avoid offending local officials by taking them by surprise.

Advantages of News Conferences

News conferences can increase the amount of coverage given to a story.

News conferences usually result in a number of direct quotes, permitting the agency to tell its story directly, rather than as interpreted by the reporter.



Limitations of News Conferences

News conferences are only effective when a story is extremely newsworthy, or a "name" figure is involved. Use of news conferences without a newsworthy story will result in a loss of credibility with the media.

News conferences require careful advance planning and coordination to ensure that all statements are prepared in the proper written form, the media is adequately notified.

If an issue is a sensitive one, the news conference can provide an opportunity for negativism to feed on itself and encourage the reporters to outdo each other in their critical and suspicious questions. The tenor of most of the resulting articles is likely to reflect the most negative reporter present. When the proponent tries to make sense to one party, he or she is likely to offend those with different points of view.

If this scenario is a possibility, a more effective approach will be issuing a news release, followed by a telephone discussion with individual reporters and a face to face interview if necessary. (See News Releases)

NEWSLETTERS

Periodic newsletters are a means of sustaining public interest in a study or proposed action, as well as documenting the progress of the decision making process.

A major purpose of a newsletter is to inform the public. But newsletters also serve the function of maintaining the visibility of the decision making process, particularly during stages when technical studies are under way and there is little opportunity for public involvement.

The value of the newsletter rests entirely upon its ability to stir up public interest and encourage involvement. A drab newsletter riddled with bureaucratic or technical jargon will elicit little enthusiasm, despite the effort you put into it. It is important that newsletters distributed to the public also be distributed internally, so that staff are at least as informed as the public.

Newsletters can have response forms printed in them, such as tear off coupons or reply cards. This assists in making the flow of information two way.

Advantages of Newsletters

Newsletters can be an important tool for keeping the public informed of the results of studies and the progress of the decision making process. They can be particularly helpful in maintaining interest during periods when technical studies are on-going and and there are few opportunities for public involvement.

Limitations of Newsletters

Preparation of newsletters can be time-consuming and printing and mailing costs can be expensive.

NEWSPAPER INSERTS

One technique which has been used to provide information to the general public, and at the same time solicit public comment, is an insert distributed through the local newspaper. This describes the study or decision making process and the various means by which the public can participate, and includes a response form on which readers can express their opinions or indicate a willingness to be involved in other activities. Most newspapers are able to handle the distribution of inserts for a modest cost per copy, since this is a frequent advertising technique, and they can often print the insert at considerably less cost than commercial printers. However, because of the numbers of copies involved, the total costs of the insert can be high.

Most urban newspapers are able to distribute inserts to selected geographic areas, rather than their entire readership, so that it is possible to target the insert at those readers who will have the greatest interest in the study or proposed action.

The percentage of returned response forms is not likely to be very high, yet in terms of total quantity the insert may provide a means of participation for a very large number of citizens, compared with other public involvement techniques. Because people who complete the response form are self-selecting, a statistical bias is introduced into the responses, so the results cannot be considered statistically valid.

Advantages of Newspaper Inserts

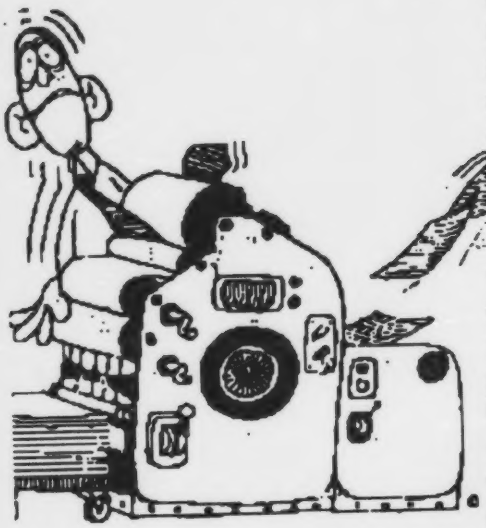
Newspaper inserts reach a much greater percentage of the population than other public involvement techniques.

Newspaper inserts provide an additional means for identifying individuals and groups interested in participating in public involvement activities.

Limitations of Newspaper Inserts

The total cost of an insert can be high because of the large number of copies printed and inserted.

The response rate of people mailing back a response form is low, and cannot be represented as statistically valid.



NEWS RELEASES

A major technique for obtaining publicity is issuing news releases. News releases are short (usually 1-3 pages) announcements of information which – hopefully – will be covered by the media. Often the news release is accompanied by more detailed background information. In some cases, the media will use material word for-word from the news release; in others, the news release will simply provide background for a larger story. Frequently media people will respond to a news release by calling for additional information before writing their story.

The key to whether or not the information from a news release is picked up by the media is "newsworthiness". If the media think the story will interest their readers or viewers, then they will give it attention. This requires that the person writing the story identify the "slant" on the story which makes it newsworthy, and write the news release accordingly. It may also require telephone follow-up to be sure a story is run.

News releases are normally prepared and issued by a Media Relations Office, or by an area or district office, but there are a few general principles that are worth knowing in case it is ever necessary to write a news release:

News releases are written so that all the most important information is in the first paragraph, the next most important information in the second paragraph, and so forth. The reasons for this are:

1) the first paragraph must capture the interest of the editor or producer, or he or she may read no further and there will be no coverage; and
2) when a story is squeezed into a limited time slot or small space the story will be cut from the bottom up, so that any important information in the bottom paragraphs will be cut.

Other general guidelines for news releases – or any other materials for the media – include:

1) Keep sentences short.
2) Use simple language instead of complex.
3) Use the active voice.
4) Add quotes or conversation to the story.
5) Avoid wordiness.
6) Write as if it were a conversation.
7) Relate the story to the reader's experience.
8) Do not overuse adjectives, ("dynamic", "outstanding", etc.)
9) Use a consistent style.
10) Be honest and strive for accuracy.

A news release can be followed by a telephone call to individual reporters and a face to face interview if necessary. When you meet one-on-one, you can bring out the questions and issues relevant for each particular print or electronic medium.

This approach is consistent with endeavouring to develop a close and continuing relationship with key reporters during the life of a project or program. By making this investment of time and energy, you are much more likely to respond to the reporters' constraints of time and space and thus obtain more effective news coverage.

Advantages of News Releases

News releases are an effective way of obtaining publicity for a story, and often stimulate the interest of the media to stories which go in greater depth than the news release itself.

Limitations of News Releases

The media will not provide coverage for news releases on topics they do not consider newsworthy.

POLITICAL PREVIEWS

At the beginning of any public involvement program, it is a good idea to inform those elected representatives whose constituents might be affected by a project. A briefing session, either with all representatives present, or individual briefings are both possibilities, depending on the particular situation. A briefing session should be preceded by the preparation of a briefing paper or other documentation as required. Such a briefing session(s) can be held prior to any official announcements or press conference of the project or the public involvement's program's start-up. In this manner, elected representatives will be fully informed should they recieve quer-ies from constituents.

Documentation should include any reports which will be distributed during the subsequent program, plus a copy of the public involvement plan itself.

POSITION PAPERS

Position papers are brief publications outlining a way of dealing with a particular issue. They are a proposal, inviting reaction and comment. Position papers may give management alternatives to test public response, and may seek new ideas or options from the readers.

Position papers are used to test new policies, planning approaches, solutions to problems , recommendations from working groups, or other proposals that may have an impact on the public. They can also be used by public working groups to test ideas with other people, before the group's recommendations are finalized.

The position paper should:

- ☐ state clearly the source of the paper, the tentative nature of the proposal it contains, and how feedback will be used;
- ☐ be prepared so readers can write in the margins;
- ☐ specify to whom comments are to be written, preferably on a pre-address - ed detachable insert;
- ☐ give enough time for responses (if aimed at the general public, give at least two months to allow for regular meetings or organized groups to take place; do not count the summer holiday period as part of your response time period); and
- ☐ identify a contact person for questions which may need interpretation.

Publish a revised paper which uses the responses received and shows how the final version will be used. Make sure this paper is mailed to those who have responded.

PUBLICATIONS

In most public information and participation programs, the primary means of providing people with basic information is print. Whether in the form of a brochure sent by householder mail, a display advertisement or tabloid insert in a newspaper, or a report or booklet of some kind, print is typically the cheapest means of distributing information.

Unlike the electronic media, print messages are relatively long lasting. In contrast to the demands of public meetings, print reaches it readers in the comfort and security of their own homes, enabling its message to be absorbed with a minimum of anxiety and at the recipient's convenience.

When communicating large quantities of information, some sort of publication is about the only mechanism of communication. The media are useful for communicating summaries of information, but not for detailed and complex information.

Publications must be written with great objectivity and a concern that all points of view are accurately represented. This differs from public relations documents which are designed to "sell" a particular position by presenting it in the best possible light. However, the attractiveness of a publication, and readability, are essential to obtain interest. To be credible, a publication should acknowledge that the agency is aware of the public's concern about the project.

A simple, clear, direct style of writing is important, even in technical publications. For information to be delivered through newspaper inserts or direct householder mail, the "Fog Index" (the percentage of words with 3 or more syllables) should be consistent with the material usually read by the public in the program area. For example, a rural weekly may have a Fog Index of 6, an urban newsmagazine 10 and a planning report 20. Ensure that the character of the material is informative rather than persuasive.

Advantages of Publications

Publications are about the only means of communicating detailed and complex information to the public.

Publications permit the story to be told in what the agency believes to be an "objective" manner, rather than with the slant provided by the news media to increase newsworthiness.

Limitations of Publications

Publications are usually designed to reach a limited audience, particularly if they are lengthy.

Considerable staff effort and cost goes into the preparation of publications.

PUBLICITY

Newspaper, radio, and television are all major communication vehicles for reaching the broad general public. Since the cost of paid advertising would be astronomical if used every time information must be provided to the public, a well-designed program to obtain free publicity can be an essential element in any public involvement program.

There are several different kinds of publicity that can be obtained through the media, depending on the newsworthiness of the issue:

Community calendars. Most media offer occasional community calendars containing brief announcements of meetings or events.

Public service announcements. While most radio and television stations will broadcast some public service announcements, they do not have to run the announcements of any one organization, and are usually in the position of picking and choosing among the announcements sent them by a number of organizations. Public service announcements may be sent to radio stations either in the form of a written script or a cassette recording. Since television is a visual medium, public service announcements for television may be accompanied by slides, or by videotape. Videotapes must be up to industry standards, and will not be the same size used in most personal or corporate videotape systems.

News conferences. A news conference is an event at which members of the media are invited to be present when a major announcement is made, or an opportunity is provided to ask questions of a "name" figure. Normally news conferences include both a formal statement and a question and answer period. News conferences can lead to increased media interest, but are only effective if the story is very newsworthy.

Media coverage. The media will often send reporters to cover the events at a public meeting or other activity. Often these stories are the general public's only source of information about what occurred.

Feature Stories. If a story is very newsworthy the media may also be willing to do a feature story. Feature stories are usually in depth stories designed to provide background, rather than just coverage of immediate events. Because they are not tied to specific events, it may take several weeks of coordination before a story actually appears.

Call-in/Talk Shows. Many radio and television stations offer call-in or talk shows at which notables, or people involved in newsworthy issues, appear as guests. Often listeners are able to phone in and ask guests about their experiences or the topic being discussed.

While it is perfectly reasonable to make every effort to obtain free publicity and present the story as effectively as possible, keep in mind that the media are in the news business, not the publicity business. Unless media people are persuaded that the story is newsworthy, it will receive minimal coverage.

Media relations staff often have established contacts within the media, and will have ideas about which media or reporter will be interested in which kind of story, and how to present a story to attract their interest.

The most important thing to remember in all media relations is to maintain credibility. There are definitely times when the media can be extremely helpful but only the if they can rely on the agency for accurate and complete information. If reporters feel that they are being manipulated, this will usually translate into negative stories, and an inability to utilize the full publicity potential of the media.

Advantages of Publicity

Publicity obtained through the media is often the only cost effective way of reaching the general public.

Information appearing in the media often has higher credibility than publications prepared by the agency, since critics are likely to see agency publications as self-serving.

Limitations of Publicity

If the media do not see a program as newsworthy, it will be difficult to obtain publicity. The media are in the news business, not the publicity business.

Credibility must be maintained with the media, even if it means releasing potentially embarrassing information. Whenever the press feels manipulated, stories will become more negative, and it will be harder to get coverage.

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

All radio and television stations are required to provide public service news coverage and programming as a condition of keeping their license. If a public involvement program is newsworthy, it should be relatively easy to obtain free publicity announcing a next meeting or inviting public involvement by sending Public Service Announcements to local radio and television stations.

Public Service Announcements sent to radio stations are usually in the form of prepared scripts of varying lengths from 10 seconds to a maximum of 60 seconds. As an alternative, many stations will accept prerecorded announcements on a cassette. The use of humor or other attention-attracting devices increases the likelihood that the material will be used. Since the announcer will "speak" the story, sentences must be brief and simple, so that they sound conversational.

Because television is a visual media, television stations prefer that the script be accompanied by slides or prerecorded on video. Both the slides and video must be up to television industry production standards.

Although radio and television stations must provide free public service time, they have no obligation to provide publicity for any particular program. The requests for time they receive usually exceed the available public service time. As a result it is best to assume that the amount of coverage will depend upon the extent to which the story is newsworthy, rather than because of any obligation of the radio or TV station.

Advantages of Public Service Announcements

Public service announcements provide a way of obtaining free publicity through the media for public involvement activities.

Limitations of Public Service Announcements

Radio and television stations are under no obligation to run a particular public service announcement, so some stations will run the announcement, and some will not.

Public service announcements must be very brief, so the amount of information which can be communicated is limited.

REPORTS

Throughout the course of a public involvement program it is often necessary to issue one or more reports summarizing the current findings of studies or detailed information about the issue or proposed action being considered. Reports are most likely to be needed:

1) when issues or problems have been thoroughly identified or described;
2) after conceptual alternatives have been developed, and
3) when the impacts of the alternatives have been identified.

Many technical reports, and even some supposedly "public" documents such as hearing reports, are often very difficult for the public to read. An executive summary in layman's language should always be prepared; depending on the complexity of the report, the summary may be sufficient for the majority of citizens, with the more detailed reports sent only to those who are sufficiently interested or have the technical training to digest the full report. It is also advisable to make copies of the full report available at the project office and on the reserve shelf of the local library. In this way other interested professionals can access the technical information easily.

The extent to which reports are read depends largely on the readability and visual attractiveness. However, reports issued as part of public involvement programs should not be "slick" or look expensive. This can give the impression that the agency is trying to "buy" the public's favor, and may imply that decisions have already been reached (why else would someone be willing to spend so much for graphics, etc.), when they really have not.

One effective way to protect against negative public reaction to reports is to ask an existing citizens' advisory group to review the report before it is issued to the public. This usually results in early detection of any problem areas, before the report has been widely distributed.

Advantages of Reports

Reports are often the only effective way of communicating detailed technical or complex information. Printed reports are comparatively low in cost compared with any other way of communicating the same information.

Reports also provide a visible record of the public inible record of the public involvement process, so that it is always clear what information has been communicated to the public.

Limitations of Reports

The public will read reports only if they are easy to understand and visually attractive. Reports that are written in industry jargon or technical lingo will normally be read only by other technical experts. Preparation of readable and attractive reports will take time and talent for explaining complex material simply, without appearing patronizing.

In many cases it is necessary to develop report summaries for distribution to the general public, with the full reports sent only to technical experts or organized groups.

PUBLIC INFORMATION FEEDBACK

ANALYZING PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT DATA

See Content Analysis.

BRIEFS

A request for written briefs is a formal method of seeking the views of organized public interest groups, industries, and local government. Briefs give a sense of judicial process and require strict adherence to form. Written briefs range from simple letters to fully researched papers.

Written briefs are needed when there are many organized groups who need a chance to put their case directly before the agency. Because this method allows for carefully considered positions to be researched and developed, it is useful for supplementing less formal public involvement methods. Written briefs give a concrete record of public comment, and therefore are valuable when policy is being developed.

If written briefs are required, the following rules apply:

-a clear statement of the subject of the briefs must be published;

-enough time must be allowed for people to do the research and writing;

-the agency must make all necessary information available to the brief writers;

-receipt of briefs should be acknowledged in writing;

-a summary of the main points of each brief should be compiled, to aid cataloguing and assessment of concerns, advice or proposals;

-all briefs submitted should be available at a viewing centre; and

-a formal paper in response to the briefs must be published, to show how the briefs have been used.

COMMUNITY OR SOCIAL PROFILES

Che community or social profile is a comprehensive summary of the key characteristics of the people of a community or study area. Its purpose is to orient planners, engineers and administrators to the social and cultural realities which they need to understand and take into account if a project, program or policy is to be accepted. It can assist the decision maker in assessing how a community is likely to respond to a new

ANALYZING PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT DATA

BRIEFS

COMMUNITY OR SOCIAL PROFILES

project or program. Community profiles are discussed at greater length in Chapter 1.

COMPUTER BASED PARTICIPATION

In recent years there has been considerable interest in using computers as the basis for new forms of public involvement. The basic approaches identified to date include: conferencing, interactive polling, simulation, or interactive computer graphics.

Computer Based Teleconferencing: The techniques of computer conferencing have been developed primarily to link participants who are geographically dispersed so that they can communicate by sending and receiving messages on remote terminal keyboards. Information, including graphics, can be made available to all participants in the same form simultaneously, and it is also possible for the agency to respond to questions asked by the public about that information. Computer conferencing could allow task forces or advisory groups meeting in separate communities to conduct a meeting which allowed for dialogue, sharing of information, and responses form the various communities.

Interactive Polling: Equipment and software programs have been developed which allow participants in a meeting to indicate their responses to statements, alternatives, or proposals by voting on a hand-held computer console. The computer collects and stores the votes, and a summary is shown on a large electronic display at the front of the room. A skilled moderator can work with the group to identify areas of consensus or disagreement and areas in which additional discussion is needed.

Computer Based Simulation: Simulation games are designed to take people through a series of choices and provide them with feedback on the consequences of their choices in meeting defined objectives. Uses of simulation games have been as varied as modeling the diplomacy leading to nuclear war, evaluating the impact of a series of choices on a natural resource base, or assessing the social consequences of alternative policy decisions.

Computer Based Interactive Graphics: A number of systems are currently being designed in which the computer displays a range of alternatives, then re-displays the alternatives or impacts in response to questions or changed group priorities.

This technique will allow a group to watch a computer display while discussing the issues and, in effect, ask the computer to display different alternatives based on different sets of assumptions or priorities.

Advantages of Computer Based Participation

Computer based techniques will permit participation of geographically dispersed people, so long as they have access to the appropriate computer consoles and telephone network. In the future, technical information about a proposed agency action could be stored in the computer and called up by a citizen at any time. Programs could even be developed that would permit citizens to raise questions and request clarification of the information.

Interaction polling permits people to be involved while offering anonymity when desired. Through the use of two-way cable television the same approach could be used to get community-wide decision making.

Interactive graphics and simulation games are both designed to help people visualize the implications of various priorities and assumptions, and may encourage the development of a consensus.

Limitations of Computer Based Participation

The availability of computers still has not reached the point that the techniques described above are useful except in specialized circumstances.

These techniques assume that participants supply their own computers. Since computers are expensive, use of these techniques may either exclude people who do not have computers, or require the agency to provide access to computers.

Many people still feel intimidated by computers. People may also resent having to participate in a preset format dictated by the computer.

Fascination with technical equipment can sometimes gloss over continuing political conflict, giving an unrealistic impression of the political realities of a situation.

Technical problems with the computers can occur at times which prove embarrassing and frustrating.

CONTENT ANALYSIS

Content analysis is a research tool used in sociology, journalism and political science to analyze the actual content of newspaper articles, letters, briefs, and submissions. Content analysis can be used to analyze the comments an agency receives during a public involvement program. The technique is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 1 of this volume.

FOCUS GROUPS

Focus groups are a market research technique which was developed as an alternative to expensive survey research techniques. A manufacturer introducing a new car might want to know people's reactions to the car in order to target an advertising program. Rather than surveys, which might cost hundreds of thousands of dollars, the manufacturer might use focus groups to get a "quick-and-dirty" assessment of public reaction.

Focus groups are open ended discussions among 8-10 individuals about a particular product or choice. It is customary to seek specific diversity of background and viewpoints among the participants so they represent important elements or publics. The discussion group is led by a moderator who is skilled in drawing out the comments and reactions which will have significance. Several focus groups will be convened, until the moderator can anticipate the comments that will be made. Usually this requires 3-4 groups. The moderator then prepares a report summarizing what was said, and draws inferences for marketing of the product or idea.

The concept of focus groups can be applied to most situation where public reaction is sought. A series of focus groups might be used to anticipate community reaction to a proposed project or proposal. The information drawn from the focus groups would help "tailor" the proposal, anticipate and respond to probable concerns, or convince the agency that public reaction would be so negative as to make the proposal unwise.

While focus groups do not provide a statistically valid analysis of public reaction to an idea or product, they do offer an inexpensive way to get a "feel" for what the general public reaction will be.

Advantages of Focus Groups

Focus groups provide a quick way to determine what public reaction is likely to be to a proposal or project.

Focus groups are inexpensive compared to other market research and polling techniques.

Focus groups provide an impression of general public reaction, instead of just the reactions of organized groups and interests.

Limitations of Focus Groups

Focus groups do not have strong statistical validity, and could be misleading if there are major sampling errors.

The moderator of focus groups must be skilled at drawing out significant comments. This may require hiring an outside consultant experienced at running focus groups.

Focus groups help predict reactions, but do not substitute for discussions with the critical interest groups.

INTERVIEWS

Interviews can be informal, loosely structured discussions, or they can be part of a poll or survey in which the interviewer asks only carefully worded pretested questions.

Interviews can be an effective part of a public involvement programs. A series of 30 to 60-minutes interviews with representatives of all the key interests can provide a quick understanding of the issues, the dynamics between the interests, and the intensity of their interest in the issue. Several days of interviews can often produce an extremely large amount of information about an issue.

For further information on interviews refer to Chapter 1 in this volume.

POLICY PROFILING

Policy profiling is a technique for assessing the impact of various individuals, groups and organizations on governmental agency decisions. The purpose of policy profiling is to provide a systematic framework and checklist which decision makers can use to make sure they carry out the kind of analysis required to assess the consequences of a decision. Policy profiling also aids decision makers in organizing their staffs and making use of other knowledgeable observers.

The basic assumptions behind policy profiling are that in order to assess the impact of relevant individuals, groups and organizations on any possible decision or course of action, it is necessary to do the following:

☐ Identify the individuals, groups and organizations (the "actors") that are likely to have a direct or indirect impact on the course of action. This means including those who have a formal role in the making or blocking of the decision; it also means including those who have an indirect impact, such as those who will make it either easier or harder to carry out a decision after it is made.

☐ Determine whether each actor supports, opposes, or is neutral toward the decision.

☐ Determine how powerful each actor is in blocking the decision, helping make it happen, or effecting the implementation of a decision.

Policy profiling has several valuable uses:

-focussing different perceptions of the political situation
-forecasting outcomes
monitoring changes in position
-identifying the potential for consensus

The actual technique employed in policy profiling requires more detail to explain than is appropriate here.

POLLS

Polls are a technique for measuring the mix of opinions held by the public. Polls are conducted by trained interviewers who ask each person interviewed exactly the same questions, and in the same order Polling can be conducted over the telephone or in person.

These questions are pretested to be sure they are clear, unbiased, and elicit the information desired. The people interviewed will be part of a sample population chosen using rules accepted by professionals in the field as guaranteeing the "randomness" or lack of bias in the sample chosen. Statistical research has been conducted to establish standards for how many people must be interviewed from a total population to insure reliability of the findings to certain levels of confidence, eg. the figures are accurate plus or minus five percent. The level of confidence can be increased by increasing the number of interviews conducted.

Polls differ from questionnaires in that the responses are tallied by the interviewer. Mailed or self-completed questionnaires are completed by the person responding and are often more open-ended. Because questionnaires may be more open-ended, they may provide more information, including information other than than anticipated by the questioner. However, polls – precisely because they are not open-ended – have greater statistical reliability.

Since polls are normally designed and administered by professionals trained in polling techniques, the costs of polls are relatively high.

Refer to Chapter 1 for more information on the use of polling techniques.

QUESTIONNAIRES

One effective method for soliciting public comment is through the use of questionnaires. There are similarities between questionnaires and polls, but questionnaires are usually completed by the person responding while the recording of responses to polls is done by the interviewer. Also questionnaires may invite open-ended responses, while polls limit the options.

Jan Andrews

For me..... how nice..... just another wee survey?

The primary advantage of questionnaires (and polls) is that it is possible to reach out beyond the organized groups to the "unorganized public". Questionnaires, because they are more open-ended, often obtain more information than do polls. But the trade-off is that less structure also reduces the level of confidence that the information is statistically valid and reliable.

Refer to Chapter 1 in this volume for further information on questionnaires.

WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS

Written submissions in a public involvement program can be formally requested, as are briefs, or can be an informal response from the public in a public involvement program, such as letters, statements or unsolicited arguments that a group or individual may submit. In the case of an informal response, there would likely be no deadline for the receipt of submissions, and so the agency would not know when to cut off receiving submissions in order to begin content analysis.

BRAINSTORMING

Brainstorming is a group technique designed to increase the group's creativity. In brainstorming, everyone in the group is encouraged to come up with as many ideas as possible, including "way-out" ones. Usually these ideas are then recorded on a flip-chart or blackboard. No evaluation is permitted until everybody is completely out of ideas.

Brainstorming is a way of generating a large number of ideas or alternatives in a hurry. Other techniques must be used for evaluation.

There are also more "advanced" versions of brainstorming in which additional techniques are employed, using different types of analogies to increase group creativity.

Advantages of Brainstorming

Brainstorming helps groups "break out" of the obvious solutions and push for more creative solutions. It also greatly increases the number of solutions which are generated.

Brainstorming provides a "psychologically safe" climate in which people feel free to participate without fear of being judged.

Disadvantages of Brainstorming

Some people may react to brainstorming as being gimmicky.

Brainstorming generates so many solutions that it is hard to evaluate them all afterwards.

COFFEE KLATCHES

The coffee klatch is a small group meeting usually held in a private home. The emphasis is on informality; the intent is to create the feeling of neighbors getting together to discuss local concerns. Typically coffee and cookies are served as part of the effort to create an informal feeling. The host or hostess will normally open the meeting, then turn the meeting over to the agency's representative. Agency staff will usually make a brief statement or presentation, then the remainder of the session is spent in informal discussion, questions and answers, etc.

Experience with coffee klatches has shown that because they are held in people's private homes, people are on "good behavior" as a matter of courtesy to the host or hostess, yet there can be informal give-and-take.

Coffee klatches have proven very effective in rural areas, where they are a social event as well. A local district agricultural officer may be able to help identify families willing to host a coffee klatch.

Advantages of Coffee Klatches

Coffee klatches provide an opportunity for give-and-take between the public and agency staff, but in an informal atmosphere which does not encourage speech-making or polarization. Because of the informal atmosphere, the public often gets the feeling of knowing agency staff as people, not just in their official role. This helps break down an-tagonism and stereotypes.

Disadvantages of Coffee Klatches

Because each coffee klatch reaches only a limited number of people, it can take a lot of coffee klatches to reach a large audience.

The term "coffee klatch" offends some managers, who somehow associate it with women's afternoon teas, etc. Behind this initial reaction there may also be a fear of the kind of interaction which a coffee klatch requires. Coffee klatches are on the public's turf, and are less predictable than normal public meetings. The result is that some managers may feel personally vulnerable at the thought of informal interaction in someone's home.

CONFERENCES

A conference is a meeting of one or more days during which technical experts or representatives of various interests are brought together to discuss an announced topic. Often conferences include presentations either by guest speakers or by participants. Although the emphasis is typically on learning, a conference or series of conferences could lead to agreement among technical specialists on a controversial technical issue, or procure an agreement on priorities among interest groups. Even if there is not yet 100 percent agreement, a conference provides an impression of the "climate of opinion" among the leading experts, or can assist in creating a similar climate of opinion when everybody is exposed to the same data.

Conferences could be a useful part of a public involvement program if the decision making process involves resolution of a technical controversy. Examples of recent conferences on important decisions include:

☐ A conference of representatives from companies, agencies, and academia to agree on research priorities for developing methodologies for assessing the social impacts of rapid energy development — the so-called "boom town phenomena".

☐ A conference of international scientists to discuss the state of the art of research on the storage of nuclear waste, and recommend future research priorities.

☐ A conference of environmental specialists from utilities and governmental agencies to discuss methodologies for assessing the cumulative effects of energy development upon fish and wildlife.

Other examples can be taken from almost any technical field.

Conferences which are intended to lead to some sort of agreement should be carefully designed to ensure interaction among people with conflicting points of view, rather than just the formal presentation of technical papers.

Another use of conferences is as a wind-up to a public involvement program consisting of responsive publications, Open Houses and planning workshops. The conference can provide a public opportunity for individuals and interest groups to present their positions to a large audience and the media. A typical format might be: introduction; half hour presentation by proponent; an hour for 6-8 interest groups to present their comments on the project in 5-10 minute presentations; open microphone for participants form the floor to comment or raise questions for the proponent or the interest group leaders (about an hour); lunch (during which time some participants will likely leave). The remainder participate in self-selected workshops on different aspects of the project for 1-2 hours and then report back for a closing plenary. Such a conference would usually be held on a Saturday. The proceedings can be videotaped and made into a short video (perhaps an hour) and copies provided to relevant cablevision stations and for use by the proponent and interest groups later. (Total video cost about $2,000 for taping and editing). Note that the video must have a balanced perspective, and not just be sales job for the proponent.

Advantages of Conferences

Conferences may lead to a "climate of opinion" or consensus of experts which can serve as the most informed estimate in trying to resolve a difficult technical question. Conferences result in a sharing of information and research which can often result in a change of opinions. Discussing the same topic for several days increases the importance of that topic to the participants.

Limitations of Conferences

Conferences take considerable time and energy to plan. Also the cost of bringing leading experts together – often from throughout the country or world – is high. In addition to planning time, costs include transportation, room and board, honoraria (if any) and the cost of the conference facility.

THE DELPHI PROCESS

The Delphi process was designed as a means of obtaining a consensus on forecasts by a group of experts while attempting to minimize any dysfunctional effects of group dynamics.

To accomplish this, the Delphi process solicits the advice of a group of experts on questionnaires, provides feedback to all participants on the statistical averages of the responses, and reports on the reasoning of those participants whose answers differ substantially from the norm, while preserving the anonymity of the participants. The panel of experts is then invited to revise their initial responses as appropriate, and a final composite answer is derived.

The prime purpose of the Delphi process is forecasting, so it is useful in those cases where forecasts are controversial politically. Instead of having an agency technical specialist make all the projections – with the likelihood that these projections will be viewed as biased – the projections can be made by a panel of experts using the Delphi process. To the extent, however, that participation is limited to experts, the consensus among the experts still may not be shared by the general public.

Not only does the Delphi process appear to help experts work effectively in developing a consensus, it also has high reliability, i.e. two groups of experts forecasting the same event will tend to come up with similar predictions. The basic steps in the Delphi process are:

1) An open ended and unstructured questionnaire is submitted to each participant. This questionnaire asks participants to indicate their forecasts concerning the topic, eg. anticipated energy consumption in twenty years.

2) The person acting as "director" of the activity consolidates the responses and prepares a list of forecasts.

3) The director then distributes the lists to the participants and requests that they make an estimate of the occurrence of each event. ("Never" is one possible answer.)

4) The participants' responses are collected and a statistical summary prepared. The summary will contain the median and the inter quartile range for each forecast.

5) The statistical summary is distributed to all participants, who are asked to give a new estimate now that they have seen the summarized response. Participants whose answers fall outside the interquartile range are also asked to state the reasoning behind the answers.

6) These responses are then summarized statistically.

7) The new statistical summary, along with the reasoning of those whose responses are significantly different than the norm, is distributed to each participant, and a final estimate is requested.

8) A final statistical summary of these estimates is made.

Advantages of the Delphi Process

The Delphi process is an effective tool for achieving a consensus on forecasts among a group of experts. It also minimizes the negative elements of group dynamics, such as over dominance by a single personality or positions taken to obtain status or acceptance from the group.

Disadvantages of the Delphi Process

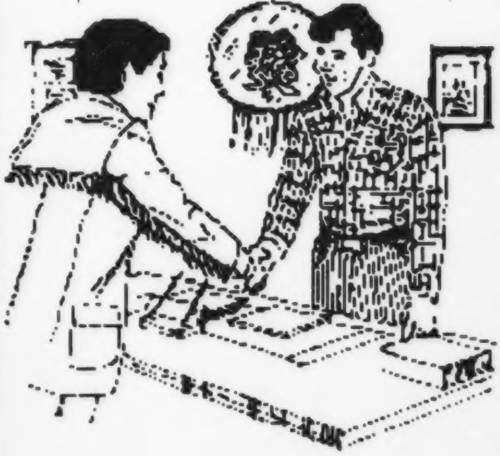
The Delphi process may have a tendency to homogenize points of view and encourage "conventional wisdom".

The process of mailing questionnaires and redistributing summaries for several iterations can be time consuming and cumbersome.

Participants may prefer to interact directly with one another rather than through the agency, particularly if they are suspicious of the agency.

Delphi still involves a small group of experts, and the public may be no more willing to accept that opinion of a group of experts than it was to accept the opinion of agency staff.

DIALOGUES



Dialogues are a form of conference initiated to improve communication between major interest groups such as industry and consumers. A group of 20-24 people are invited to attend a two day dialogue on a selected topic or issue. The participants could be two parties (such as industry and environmental interests) or they could be from several groups.

Representatives could be selected by an independent consultant who takes into account ability to effectively present a position without being unduly antagonistic or abrasive.

Dialogues are held in a retreat setting, with minimal opportunities to "escape" to nearby golf courses, etc. The schedule allows for ample socializing time, as one of the purposes of the dialogue is to encourage the development of personal relationships between the leaders of the interest groups.

The dialogue begins with an informal social event at which introductions are made. During the first working session which follows, each participant has 3-5 minutes to state his or her feelings about the topic being discussed during the conference. In subsequent working sessions there is a loose but adaptable agenda covering the major aspects of the announced topic. A neutral meeting facilitator helps the group stay on the track, encourages participation and makes sure everybody feels listened to.

The hope is that the interest group leaders will take back not only specific ideas, but also the feeling that open communication is possible and desirable.

Advantages of Dialogues

Dialogues encourage open communication between management and leaders of groups that are often critical. The flexible schedule and retreat setting also encourage the development of personal relationships, helping break down stereotypes and role casting. Dialogues are often helpful in defining the points of common interest between the agency and citizen groups.

Limitations of Dialogues

Dialogues usually focus on a broad general topic, and do not address specific actions which are under consideration. In fact, dialogue sessions are specifically designed to reduce the participants' perceptions of each other as adversaries. If a dialogue session were held as part of a public involvement program to consider a specific action, participants would be far more likely to have to defend fixed positions, and be less willing to drop barriers and get to know other participants personally. As a result, dialogue sessions are probably more effective as a general program of sensitizing management to the concerns of citizen groups, or whenever there is a general topic to be discussed, rather than as an element in a public involvement program considering a proposed action.

FIELD OFFICES

Agency planners and decision makers often work far from the site of a study or project, or in some other way are physically isolated from people who are likely to be affected by a decision. A field office provides the opportunity for more informal interaction with the community. Typically, a field office is located in a highly visible part of the community so that the largest number of people will know of its existence. A shopping center or downtown store front is a good site. On construction projects a trailer or other mobile unit could serve as a field office.

The field office is staffed by people working on the study or project who are able to answer questions and solicit opinions from the local community. The office is designed to encourage "drop-ins" and other types of informal interaction with the community, with exhibits, charts, maps, brochures, and other materials on display. Field office staff are encouraged to be involved as much as possible in the local community. If large enough, the office can be the site for meetings, seminars, workshops, open houses, and other events. By housing these activities, the field office becomes the focal point for participation in the decision making process.

A field office might also be particularly useful where there is a seasonal influx of users from a wide geographic area, for example, a resort area which draws tourists. The field office would facilitate participation by users who might otherwise be unaware of the decision or issue under study.

Advantages of a Field Office

A field office provides a visible means of informal interaction with the local community at the convenience of the residents.

The presence of a field office communicates the value the agency places upon community sentiment.

Field office staff often obtain a deeper understanding of community needs and desires than do agency staff who live and work far away.

Limitations of a Field Office

A field office can be costly to staff and operate.

Unless the project or issue is of considerable local interest, the amount of use of the field office by local residents may not justify its cost. If more than one community is involved, those communities that do not have field offices may feel slighted.

LARGE MEETINGS

When issues are controversial, public meetings may have audiences ranging in size from several hundred to several thousand people. Such meetings are often noisy, lengthy and occasionally confrontational.

The primary advantage of large meetings is that everybody has access to the same information, hears everybody's position, and observes the interaction between the various interests. This provides both visibility and credibility to the process.

But there can be problems with large public meetings. The first problem is that even though there may be several hundred participants or more, it is still possible to hear from only 20-30 in an evening. Although the sentiments of the audience can sometimes be surmised based on applause for speakers, often it is only possible to determine that there is a great deal of interest; the positions of many of the people who attend will remain unknown.

In the same way that large meetings are a good opportunity to communicate information, they are also a marvelous time for individuals or groups to make impassioned appeals to the audience to win them over to their position. The result is that there is often a good deal of maneuvering taking place by organized groups to be sure that they gain maximum advantage from the event. Organized groups may be sure the audience is packed with their supporters, may assign speakers to cover particular topics in order to be sure that all their points get covered, and may make an effort to have their speakers called on at those points in the meeting when their presentations will have the most impact. Leaders of interest groups may even make demagogic appeals to the audience to walk out, keep agency representatives from speaking, etc. At times large public meetings can take on the air of a three-ring circus. And precisely because this is the one time that leaders must be seen defending the interests of their constituency in front of their own membership, there can be considerable posturing, and the likelihood that positions will be hardened rather than moderated by the meeting.

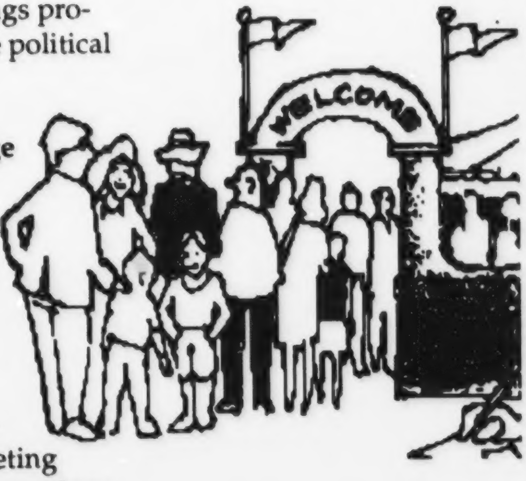
Another problem with large meetings is that they create that the impression that "the public has spoken", resulting in the expectation that the agency is obliged to accept the dominant point of view at the meeting as the "true" expression of public feeling. In other cases there is a clear cut consensus, but it may not take into account other needs or interests, eg. a local community may oppose an action that has broad regional benefits.

Leadership of a large public meeting can either be very easy, if the audience is cooperative, or it can tax the most skilled of meeting leaders. Steps can be taken to increase the effectiveness of a large meeting, which are described in Chapter 2.

Advantages of Large Meetings

Large meetings are an effective way of exposing a large number of people to the same information, the positions of all the interests and the interactions between interests.

Large public meetings provide visibility to the political process.



Limitations of Large Meetings

Only a small percentage of the audience has a chance to speak.

There may be manipulation of the meeting by interest groups, creating an impression of public sentiment which does not accurately reflect the feelings of the general public.

Large meetings tend to increase polarization of positions, rather than encourage negotiations of agreement. Guidelines for conducting large meetings are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2.

NOMINAL GROUP PROCESS

The nominal group process is designed to help groups generate creative ideas and information. It has also been used by some as a technique for generating consensus. The principles of nominal group process come from research suggesting that people generate more ideas and information when they work in the presence of each other, but do not interact at first. According to this research, when people interact in groups they are more likely to react to each other's ideas, rather than come up with new ideas. Nominal group process avoids this problem by having people generate their own ideas on paper before sharing the ideas with others, and by having people report their ideas in a structured manner which encourages production of the largest number of ideas. Nominal group process also results in a simple numerical ranking of the ideas generated by the participants. The complete nominal group process takes at least one and a half hours to complete. It can be expanded to occupy an entire meeting, or portions of the technique can be used as part of an overall meeting format.

Although nominal group process results in a ranking of ideas, this is more in the nature of a quick straw vote, and is based on only a minimal discussion or evaluation of the ideas. As a result participants must understand that the rankings they give are very preliminary and not binding. Careful staff analysis of the utility of the ideas may produce a very different outcome.

The procedure for nominal group process is as follows:

1) **Opening Presentation:** After an initial presentation describing the nominal group process, the audience is broken into small groups of 6-9 participants.

2) **Discussion Leader and Recorder:** Each group is assigned a discussion leader and a recorder. Prior to the meeting, these staff people will have put up a minimum of four sheets of newsprint, and also have ready a supply of felt-tip pens, scratch pads, pencils, and index cards.

3) **Introductions:** The discussion leader will introduce himself/herself, and invite everyone in the group to do the same.

4) **Posing the Question:** The discussion leader will then present the question which is to be answered.

This question will be carefully worded in order to draw out the specific information desired. This question will be written at the top of one of the flip chart sheets.

5) Generating Ideas: Participants are provided with paper and asked to write down all the answers they can think of to the questions posed. These notes are for their own use only and will not be collected.

6) Recording Ideas: Each person is then asked in turn for one idea. The idea will be summarized by the recorder on the newsprint, as accurately as possible. No discussion is permitted, except that people may suggest alternative wording to the recorder. The discussion leader will keep going around the room, one idea per person, until the group is out of ideas. Anyone can say "pass" without giving up their turn on the next round. The process continues until everyone is "passing". Participants are not limited to the ideas they have written down, but can share new ideas that have been triggered by others' ideas. Alphabetize the items on the list: A-Z, AA-ZZ, etc.

7) Discussion: Time is then allowed for discussion of each item, beginning at the top of the list. The discussion should be aimed towards understanding each idea, its importance, and its weaknesses. While people may criticize an idea, it is important that they simply make their points and not get into an extended argument. Move rapidly through the list, as there is always a tendency to take too long on the first half of the list, not leaving enough time to do justice to the second half. This activity usually takes a minimum of about forty minutes, and can be permitted to take considerablymore time if desired.

8) Selecting Favored Ideas: Each person then picks the ideas that he or she thinks are best. Instructions should be given to select a specific number, such as the best five, or the best eight. These ideas should be written on index cards, one idea per card. Participants may prefer just to write the letter of the item on the list (A, F, BB, etc.) or a brief summary, so that they do not have to write out the entire idea.

9) Ranking Favored Ideas: Participants then arrange their cards in preferential order, with the ones they like the most at the top. If they have been asked to select eight ideas, then they put an "8" on the most favored idea, and number on down to a "1" for their least favored idea among the eight selected.

10) Scoring: A score sheet should then be posted which contains a list of all the alphabet letters used on the lists of ideas. Then the participants call off the items they selected,and the points assigned to each, eg. "G-eight points, L-seven points, A-six points, etc". When all the scores have been shared, tally the score for each letter of the alphabet. The highest scoring item receives the number one ranking, and so forth. Post the rankings for the top 5-10 ideas, depending on where a natural break occurs between high scores and low scores.

11) Discussion of Results: The participants may then want to discuss the results. Depending on the time remaining in the meeting this discussion may be brief or lengthy.

12) Reminder of Subsequent Analysis: Participants should be reminded that staff will conduct a detailed analysis of all items, not just the ones receiving high ranking. They should also be reminded that this analysis could result in a considerable change in the ranking of items.

Advantages of Nominal Group Process

Nominal group process is an effective way of generating a large amount of ideas or information. It also provides a rough preliminary estimate of the acceptability of the ideas to the public. Emphasis in nominal group process is on the number of ideas generated, rather than on evaluation of ideas.

The nominal group process is a format which permits people of very different views to work together with a minimum of friction or disagreements. Having worked together effectively in this manner once, they may be able to work together more effectively in the future.

Limitations of Nominal Group Process

As indicated above, nominal group process is good for generating ideas, but only does a cursory job of evaluating them. Detailed staff analysis of the ideas is still necessary.

Because nominal group process does generate a ranking of ideas, it can create the expectation that the agency is bound by these rankings, even though they are very preliminary.

Nominal group process is a

very structured activity, and people who come to a meeting to express their feelings, and particularly to win others over to their point of view, may feel restricted and resentful of the structure. Some people may feel "processed" rather than consulted.

OPEN HOUSES

An open house is an event at which citizens can drop in at a central facility during announced hours to view displays, ask questions, or discuss issues with agency staff.

The Open House is usually located in some valued local space eg. a room in a library, school or church, and runs from 2-9 p.m. so that it is accessible to mothers with small children, teenagers returning from school and adults before or after supper. Visitors may come at any time and stay for as long or little as they like. (In some rural areas in winter 1-6 p.m. works best.)

A series of display panels, arranged on easels in a rough circle, present the purpose of the project, the study team, various aspects of the issues, evaluation criteria, alternative solutions etc. Often a diagram on one panel is followed by a short text explanation on the next so the visitor can obtain a grasp of the whole project without being led by the hand and talked at.

Advantages of Open Houses

The primary purpose of open houses is to educate citizens regarding the study or proposed action. Open houses accomplish this in an informal manner, at the convenience of the participants. Because of the informality there is an opportunity for direct interaction between agency staff and citizens. This provides an opportunity to correct misinformation, and permits in depth exploration of citizens' opinions. It also permits the development of personal relationships between staff and citizens. With open houses, it is often possible to speak directly with more citizens than at a public meeting.

Limitations of Open Houses

Open houses are primarily a tool for informing the public rather than getting information from the public, although it is possible to obtain public response through feedback sheets or response forms. To be effective open houses must be well publicized, and informative displays must be prepared. This can require considerable preparation

STAFFING
REPORT ON SERVICES

and staff time.

Normally open houses are held at the convenience of the public, so may require evening or weekend time from staff.

Further information on open houses is provided in Chapter 2.

PANELS

One technique for bringing out a range of ideas at a meeting is to establish a panel of experts or leaders who interact in front of the audience. The value of a panel is that interaction between the panelists can result in raising new issues, clarifying points and making the views of the various interests visible. If panelists do not interact, but simply make individual presentations, there is not much point to having a panel.

The alternatives in setting up a panel are either to select the individual who are most knowledgeable about a topic, or select people who can best represent viewpoints of the various interests. Some consideration may also be given to the mix of personalities to ensure that there is adequate interaction on the one hand, while avoiding undue antagonism on the other.

Panels may be effective either at the beginning of a meeting, to encourage discussion, or as a means of getting reports back from small working groups at the end of a meeting.

Advantages of Panels

Panels permit interaction between experts or leaders which draws out ideas, facts, and issues in front of an audience. As a result they can be used to stimulate further discussion, or to educate an audience.

Limitations of Panels

If the mix of personalities is not right, panels can be dull and uninteresting or degenerate into personal attacks.

Participation is limited to only those on the panel, even though others may have important ideas or comments.

PARTICIPATORY TELEVISION

Since television reaches a large number of people it has potential as a mechanism for public involvement, particularly since the advent of two-way cable television, which permits the audience to send signals back to the station. This could be used to sample opinion during the course of a television program.

The major uses of television in public involvement programs to date include:

☐ Televised public meetings, so that people who cannot attend the meeting are aware of the information presented and opinions expressed.

☐ Telethon or call-in shows with agency staff or other experts answering telephone calls from viewers. Questions or comments from viewers are recorded on a time-lag system so that they can be played back to the audience. These programs can be similar to television talk shows where a host, and often one or more guests, respond to calls. Or it is possible to use the telethon format with banks of people answering the phone, summarizing comments received, and sending questions or tallies to the announcer for communication to the audience.

☐ A third approach is to broadcast a program which describes the major issues and alternative courses of action, and invites reaction either by phone, or with a mail-in ballot. In some cases viewers have been organized into small groups to view the program together, participate in a discussion following the program, then express their preferences by mail. Response forms have been distributed through churches, schools, unions, clubs, and so forth. The announcement of these television programs could be made through a newsletter, which could also contain a response form.

☐ On a topic of considerable public interest it may also be possible to obtain a regular, eg. weekly bloc of time on a public or cable station. This program would allow for reports on activities, interviews with leaders of various interest groups, or even debates between representatives of different points of view.

☐ There is considerable interest in the possibilities of two-way cable television as a medium for public involvement. A few cities, notably Columbus, Ohio, have installed such systems and use them as an effective mechanism for participation. The limitations on such systems have primarily to do with the technology, and the cost of installing response units in each home. Some response units permit full verbal response, while others permit only yes/no responses or selection of multiple choice answers.

Although television holds tremendous potential as a medium for participation, there are also some limitations which must be faced. The bulk of the viewers will prefer to watch their favorite weekly comedy or adventure program, rather than participate in a televised public meeting. Only if the topic is of major public interest is there likely to be much of a viewing audience. As a result, it is difficult to get viewing time on major commercial channels. Instead coverage is likely be limited to public or cable television stations which have a considerably smaller viewing audience. So although the audience will be larger than the audience which would appear at a public meeting, it is still likely to be an educated elite of those deeply interested in the issue.

If television is used to solicit responses, there is also the danger that the responses will be interpreted as if they were a vote, with some expectation that they may be binding on the agency. The viewing audience of a television program is inevitably a nonrepresentative sample, and this is even more true when the viewing audience is small. Voting could also lead to abuses by interest groups, with the results telling more about which groups are well organized than about public opinion.

Advantages of Participatory Television

Participatory television has the potential to reach a very large audience.

This technique is convenient for the public, since people can participate at home by viewing the program and responding by mail, phone, or two-way cable.

A well prepared television program can educate the public about the issues under consideration.

Limitations of Participatory Television

Although the size of the audience will probably be larger than with other public involvement techniques, the audience will still be somewhat unrepresentative of the general public.

Complaints may be made that an agency did not fairly or objectively portray the issue on the television program.

A strong vote in favor of a particular alternative may be a function of an unrepresentative viewing audience, or careful organization by one of the interest groups, rather than an accurate representation of public opinion.

PHONE LINES

People often find it very difficult to locate the right person within an agency when they wish to obtain information about a particular decision. A single telephone number that citizens call to ask questions or make comments can remedy this problem. This number should be easily remembered, and publicized in brochures, reports, news stories, paid advertising, etc. If the study area is very large or if agency offices are far from the study area, the number is usually toll free.

The phone line can be set up in several different ways. It can be a direct phone line to a single staff person whose responsibility is to answer questions and receive comments; it can ring into an office occupied by several staff people; or it can be put on a recording device for phone-backs. There is also potential for use as a phone-in tape library; people wanting information on a particular subject could be played a brief pre-recorded tape on that subject over the phone. If a recording device is used it can also provide information to callers by announcing the date, time and place of future public involvement activities. This can be used as a way of coordinating among members of an advisory group or others active in the public involvement program. Instead of having to call everybody about a meeting, each member can call in and get the needed information from a recorded announcement. A recording device can also be used to record public comment, and incorporate this comment in any public record.

Although there are advantages to the use of recording equipment, many citizens do not like to talk to a machine, and will feel frustrated if that is all they can ever reach. If messages are left on a recording device they should be responded to promptly or credibility will be lost.

Obviously a major consideration in the effectiveness of the phone line will be the interpersonal communication skills of the people handling the phone calls. Defensive or insensitive responses to public comment may produce a negative effect that overrides the positive benefit of establishing a phone line as a means of communication.

Calling the phone line a "hotline" suggests immediate access and response; if an answering machine is used when the line is not staffed, then the hotline is available 7 days a week, 24 hours a day.

Advantages

The phone line helps citizens locate those people within the agency who have the information they need, or to whom they should be speaking regarding specific issues. It can also provide a convenient mechanism for receiving public comments.

A phone line can be a useful mechanism for coordination of public involvement activities, since it provides a single source of information about the time, date and place of various public involvement activities.

Disadvantages

Defensive or insensitive responses to callers' comments may produce a negative reaction from the public.

Staff must be prepared to provide information requested by the public promptly. This can affect other work priorities.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Whenever people work together, meetings must be scheduled. During the course of a public involvement program there can be a number of meetings, often of very different types, from small group planning sessions to meetings attended by several thousand people. Meetings vary in informality from coffee klatches in people's homes to formal hearings with a hearing officer, court reporters and registered speakers. Knowing how to design effective meetings that are appropriate to the situation is an essential skill in conducting public involvement programs. Refer to Chapter 2 for further information on conducting public meetings.

SIMULATION GAMES

Simulation games are designed to provide feedback on the most likely results of making particular policy choices or decisions. By participating in a simulation game, citizens learn about the impact of decisions and the interrelatedness of various features of an environmental or economic system. The simulation game provides a risk-free opportunity for an interest group to take a position on an alternative and receive information about the economic, social and environmental consequences of that position, as well as the reactions of other interest groups.

Games vary greatly in their complexity and the length of time required to play them. Some games can be played with manual game boards or paper and pencil; others require the use of a computer.

Some can be played in a few hours, while others take several days. A game that closely resembles the real situation will usually provide the greatest information; however, a highly realistic game tends to be extremely complex and is therefore more time consuming to learn and play, and often less enjoyable to play. A computer assisted game can consider a larger number of factors than a manual game, but is substantially more expensive to develop and must be played where computer access is available. Numerous universities and consulting firms have developed simulation games, with various degrees of complexity and playability, that are available for use upon payment of a rental or consulting fee.

While simulation games are an effective educational device, they generally do not provide opportunities for the public to comment directly on the proposed action or issue being studied. As a result, they can be used to educate the public and gain enthusiasm for participation in the study, but they must be combined with other techniques designed to solicit comment directly on the issues or action being considered.

Advantages of Simulation Games

A simulation game provides the public with information about the consequences of various policy positions or decisions.

It also provides the public with an understanding of the dynamics of an economic, social, or environmental system.

Participation in a simulation game is usually an enjoyable experience and participants often develop personal relationships that are maintained throughout the entire public involvement process.

Limitations of Simulation Games

Many of the simulation games on the market are confusing, overly technical, or simplistic. Great care must be exercised in selecting a simulation game suitable to the situation. If a customized game must be developed, the costs are generally very high.

Simulation typically does not provide opportunities for comment on the proposed action or issue under study.

Since few games have a perfect fit with reality, citizens may apply the game's rules inappropriately in the real situation.

People may become so engrossed in the game that they forget about the real issues at hand.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Because an agency can possess greater information than the public and access more resources, the public can feel intimidated by staff. One way to resolve this problem is to provide technical assistance to an advisory group or other representative body, or directly to the public. Technical assistance may include helping various individuals or interest groups analyze issues, evaluate the impact of alternatives, or develop their own alternatives.

REPORT ON SERVICES
PRESS RELEASE

Technical assistance can be provided by technical staff as part of their regular jobs, specific staff members can be designated as advisors to interest groups, or money to hire independent consultants can be provided.

A major purpose of providing technical assistance is to ensure that citizens can develop alternatives as technically developed as those of the agency, so that evaluation is fair and equitable. This is especially important when positions on issues differ substantially from those of the agency. Also, in highly controversial situations, technical staff may be mistrusted, in which case the "facts" generated by independent technical advisors may be more acceptable than the "facts" generated by the agency's staff.

The choice between providing assistance with agency staff or with independent consultants is tied to the degree of trust between the agency and the interested publics. If there is a history of public animosity towards the agency, it is probably wise to use independent consultants.

Advantages of Technical Assistance

Provision of technical assistance reduces the likelihood that citizens will feel intimidated by the expertise of technical staff. Interest groups can develop alternatives at a high enough level of expertise to enable equitable evaluation.

If some animosity exists between the agency and citizen groups, the facts generated by independent consultants may be more acceptable to the public than those generated by agency staff – even when they are in agreement.

Limitations of Technical Assistance

If the agency is not open to alternatives, staff who are called on to provide technical assistance may be placed in a position of divided loyalties.

There may be a tendency to provide technical assistance only to the most vocal groups, with the result that a bias is produced in that direction.

TOWN MEETINGS

The term "town meeting" indicates a meeting with no set topics in which people from the community get together with agency officials and talk about whatever is on their minds. No votes are taken, and the discussion is between the audience and agency officials. There is no fixed agenda, so participants can talk about any issues which concern them.

Because there is no specific agenda, the town meeting format may be more suitable to sensitizing top management on public concerns and creating a good relationship with the local community, rather than as a format for discussion of a specific proposed action. Town meetings might be repeated periodically in communities to keep communication lines open and sense issues when they are first emerging.

Refer to Chapter 3 for further information on public meetings.

Advantages of Town Meetings

Town meetings can sensitize management to the concerns of the local community, and may lead to early identification of problems.

Town meetings can develop a pattern of open communication between the agency and the community.

Limitations of Town Meetings

Since town meetings do not have a set agenda they are not a suitable format for meetings on specific proposed actions or plans.

TRADE OFF GAMES

Trade off games are a tool for helping people clarify their priorities and values, and in turn providing the agency with information on what is really most important to people. Often with public involvement programs, people participating in needs studies may indicate that they "want their cake and they want to eat it too". Trade off games are a useful way of helping people understand that budgets are limited, not everything can be provided, and of soliciting input on which programs/projects people view as the most and least critical.

The term "game" is used to indicate that usually a model of a real situation is used; plus there is usually an element of game playing and strategy involved, so the exercise is entertaining. Games can be custom-designed for a given situation, such as housing issues or social services programming.

Trade off games usually require a workshop setting of a relatively small group of people. They are most effective if the people have already been involved in the program to some extent and have some knowledge of the issues, for example, through having participated in earlier public meetings, a series of advisory committee meetings, or through having completed questionnaires. Carrying out a game requires a time period of two-three hours minimum, to explain the game, play it and discuss results afterwards.

WORKSHOPS

Workshops are usually small meetings which are designed not only for the group to discuss a topic, but actually perform assigned tasks, generating a group "product". They can be established specifically around a problem solving task. Many of the guidelines for advisory groups apply to holding workshops (See Chapter 2).

EXTENDED INVOLVEMENT TECHNIQUES

ADVISORY COMMITTEES

One of the most frequently used public involvement techniques is the establishment of an advisory committee. Advisory committees go under a variety of names, including citizens' committees, consumer advisory councils or panels, task forces, technical advisory committees, working groups, and so forth. While each of these names means something different, they all describe the establishment of a relatively small group of people who represent various interests, points of view, or fields of expertise, to advise on proposed actions.

For further information on advisory committees see Chapter 3.

CHARRETTES

A charrette is a prolonged meeting or series of meetings that brings all the essential publics together in an attempt to achieve mutual agreement. The essential philosophy behind a charrette is to get together everybody required to obtain an agreement, and to keep them together until an agreement has been reached. As a result, some charrettes are marathon sessions lasting an entire weekend or week. Some charrettes have even been twenty-four-hours-a-day ventures, with food and sleeping quarters provided to participants.

Three elements of a charrette are crucial to its success:

1. All major publics must be present.

2. All participants must agree to remain in the meeting, however long it takes to resolve differences and arrive at a plan that is acceptable to all parties.

3. All individuals who attend the charrette must come with the expectation that the product of the meeting will be a plan that is acceptable to all participants, and any decisions must reflect the consensus of all participants.

A charrette can help achieve agreement within a short time among various publics and agencies, or resolve an impasse among various groups on an issue which requires prompt resolution, eg. emergency draining of reservoirs, clean-up of PCBs and so forth. Without a sense of urgency, agency interest groups leaders may not be willing to commit the time to "hang-in" until the issue is resolved.

A charrette does involve considerable preparation, usually by a steering committee representing the key interests or agencies that will be involved.

Advantages of a Charrette

A charrette can be an effective means of achieving a consensus among conflicting groups or interests. As all the critical actors are involved, agreement on a plan should result in a commitment to implementation by all parties. In addition, participants in a charrette gain a better understanding of the positions held by other groups, and they may even change their perspectives. In fact, some charrettes have resulted in feelings of teamwork and cooperation that have extended beyond the individual issue which was the topic of the charrette.

Limitations of a Charrette

A charrette is effective only when all parties have sufficient sense of urgency or priority that they are willing to make the time commitment to participate until the issue is resolved. A charrette can only work if groups or agencies are willing to live with the commitments made by their representatives who attended the charrette. Also, because of the time commitment involved, some citizens are unable to participate in charrettes because of child care and work requirements.

TASK FORCES

A task force is a form of advisory group. The term "task force" is usually reserved for a group that has a specific task to accomplish, and then is dissolved, as contrasted with other kinds of advisory groups which are continuing in nature. Refer to Chapter 3 for detailed guidelines on handling advisory groups and committees.

TASK FORCES

ARBITRATION

ARBITRATION

Arbitration is a process in which parties to a conflict agree to the selection of a neutral third party who will serve as arbitrator. Each side presents its position to the arbitrator who, after whatever research is needed, states what he or she believes to be an equitable solution. Arbitration can either be binding, when all parties have agreed in advance to accept the arbitrator's recommendation, or non-binding, when all sides reserve judgment until after seeing the arbitrator's recommendations. Even in non-binding arbitration the arbitrator's recommendation can carry considerable weight, since groups that will not accept the recommendation may appear to be unreasonable and lose either their members' support, or outside political support.

Normally arbitration is commonly used in those cases where the sides cannot reach agreement because for one side to get something the other must give up something, yet there is enough mutual dependence that neither side can afford to have the issue remain unresolved. In recent years there has been an interest in applying the principles of labour/management negotiations to environmental or consumer controversies. This has resulted in an interest in the use of arbitration. For arbitration to work, however, there has to be an acceptable third party, and a political situation in which all sides lose more by having the issue unresolved than they do by fighting on.

Advantages of Arbitration

The advantage of arbitration is that the judgment as to an equitable solution is made by an uninvolved third party, who takes the time to be thoroughly informed. Also, if arbitration is binding, or it is politically unacceptable for groups to oppose the arbitrator's recommendations, then the issue is actually resolved.

Disadvantages of Arbitration

There are several preconditions which must be met before arbitration is possible:

1) All parties to the conflict must accept that they stand to lose more if they do not

get a timely resolution than they could from any recommendation of the arbitrator.

2) There must be a third party acceptable to all groups.

3) There usually must be a willingness to live by the arbitrator's recommendations, or political pressure, which require that both parties take the arbitrator's recommendations seriously.

In addition to being useful only in limited circumstances, arbitration is also a kind of "last hope" technique. If it fails, the potential for conflict resolution is limited.

CONCILIATION

Conciliation is generally an effort to improve communications between conflicing parties, to allow them to negotiate conflict. It differs from either mediation or arbitration in that there may not be any formal acceptance of the conciliator's role by the parties. To use an international example: i.e. One country may attempt to bring about better communication between two other countries that are in conflict. Because there is no formal agreement on the conciliator's role, either side may break off discussions without losing face. If the conciliation effort is successful, the conciliation phase will end when the two countries formally agree to enter into negotiations or peace talks.

The ability of a federal agency to act as a conciliator may be limited since the agency may be a party to the conflict, rather than having the neutrality necessary to be a conciliator. Only if the conflict is between other parties could the agency act as conciliator. However, the agency could seek out a conciliator to assist in resolving any conflict in which it is involved.

In the future, regulatory bodies may be more active in adopting the posture of conciliator, attempting to work things out by mutual agreement rather than having to choose sides and perpetuate win/lose conflicts. An increasing number of regulatory bodies are encouraging applicants to conduct their own public involvement prior to presenting their application, so that as many issues as possible are resolved before the regulatory body is put in the position of having to choose between conflicting positions.

Advantages of Conciliation

A third party may be able to bring about improved communications leading to negotiations between conflicting parties, when it would mean a loss of face or power for either of the parties to suggest the desirability of negotiations. Both parties get brought into the conflict without any suggestion that one of the groups made the first move, which might imply weakness, or a soft position.

A conciliator may be able to clarify the positions of the groups to each other, removing stereotypes and identifying commonalities.

Disadvantages of Conciliation

The conciliator has very limited power in the situation and can pull off an agreement only if the sides are convinced they can win more by negotiation than by continuing confrontation. Without some kind of leverage or power, the conciliator is often unable to get the parties to the bargaining table.

MEDIATION

The practices of labor/management mediation have been applied with some success in resolving controversies involving environmental and energy issues. The key element in mediation is the intervention of a disinterested third-party who helps the parties reach agreements. The mediator not only structures the deliberations, but also serves as a conduit for communication among the parties.

Mediation is possible only when the various interests to a conflict believe they can accomplish more by negotiation than by continuing to fight. This will normally occur when all sides recoginize that they have more to lose with a stalemate than through negotiation. A powerful third party may also bring about mediation if the threat of action by the third party is greater than the possible losses experienced in negotiation.

Advantages of Mediation

Mediation can result in an agreement that is supported by all parties to a conflict.

A mediator suggests productive procedure which enables parties to focus on the substantive issues of a controversy. Mediation can lead to a faster resolution of issues than other procedures that may be dragged out through the legal or political system.

Limitations of Mediation

Mediation, like negotiation, is voluntary. It will work only when all parties to the conflict agree to accept a mediator. The technique requires the services of a skilled and credible third party mediator.

NEGOTIATION

Negotiation is a voluntary process in which all parties in a conflict agree to sit down and try to resolve their differences. Parties agree on the procedures they will use, educate each other about their respective issues and interests, generate alternatives and evaluate acceptable options. If successful, negotiations result in an agreement that all parties are willing to live with. Decisions are made by concensus. Representatives are appointed with the understanding that the organizations they represent will have the opportunity to approve or disapprove of any agreements that are reached. Negotiation has been used in the environmental area to resolve differences over local projects and it has been applied to contoversial federal programs and policies.

Advantages of Negotiation

Negotiation provides a forum for all parties to educate each other about a problem and to jointly identify workable solutions. It prvides an alternative to adversarial activities. This approach places the responsibility on all the parties to find a solution that they all can live with. Agreements reached through negotiation are more likely to be workable and to be implemented.

Disadvantages of Negotiation

All parties must be represented. Sometimes one or more parties does not want to participate. Because the process is voluntary, parties can drop out at any time and possibly terminate the discussions. Parties must be willing and able to act in good faith. The issues must be subject to negotiation. It can take more time to reach a negotiated agreement than it does to let a company or agency make a decision. It may be difficult to conduct when time is limited.

NIAGARA PROCESS

The Niagara process is a consultation/concensus building approach developed by the Niagara Institute in southern Ontario. It has been used in several instances by Environment Canada in the development of new legislation and is discussed in greater detail in Volume 2. It has been used to obtain concensus among a wide variety of interest groups, such as governments, industry, labour and non-government organizations. It is probably most appropriate for problem-solving and policy development applications, rather than the environmental aspects of project siting.

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* A **bold entry** indicates a chapter description.

Appendix I
List of Other Resource Materials

A considerable body of literature regarding public involvement has been developing in recent years. The list below is not all-inclusive, but does include most of the materials which would be of greatest assistance to people actually conducting public involvement programs.

General

Ducsik, Dennis W., Edison Electric Institute's Workshop on Utility Experience with Advance Public Participation in Planning - Proceedings, Washington D.C.; Edison Electric Institute, 1982. A brief synopsis of a conference at which utility people working with public involvement discussed their experiences.

Creighton, James L. and Jerry Delli Priscoli, eds., Public Involvement Techniques: A Reader of Ten-Years Experience at the Institute for Water Resources, (IWR Report-82-R1), Fort Belvoir, Virginia: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Institute for Water Resources, 1983. A compendium of articles on virtually all public involvement techniques.

Jordan, D., et al, Effective Citizen Participation in Transportation Planning - Vol. 2, A Catalog of Techniques, Washington D.D.: U.S. Department of Transportation (FHWA), 1976. An early catalog of major public involvement techniques.

Langton, Stuart (Editor), Citizen Participation Perspectives: Proceedings of the National Conference on Public Involvement, Lincoln Filene Center for Citizenship and Public Affairs, Tufts University, Medford, Massachusetts, 1979. A collection of presentations made at the National Conference on Citizen Participation in 1978. Includes articles by most of the major figures in the field, and includes articles on consumer affairs and citizen action, as well as public involvement.

Connor, Desmond M. Constructive Citizen Participation, A Resource Book, Rev. Ed. 1985, Development Press, Victoria, British Columbia. A comprehensive collection of how-to-do-it articles, relevant professional papers and case studies.

William D. Coplin, Donald J. McMaster and Michael K. O'Leary "Creating A Policy Profile" in Public Involvement Techniques: A Reader of Ten Years Experience at the Institute for Water Resources. James Creighton, Jerry Delli Priscoli, and C. Mark Dunning (eds.). IWR Research Project 82-R1, May 1983.

Environment Council of Alberta. Involvement and Environment - Proceedings of the Canadian Conference on Public Participation. Ed. by Barry Sadler. 1978. 2 vols. Edmonton, Alberta. The proceedings of this national conference serve to provide a theoretical overview of the state of the art of public involvement in environmental issues. Although ten years old, many of the issues discussed are very valid today.

Farrell, G. M.; Melin, J. P.; and Stacey, S. R. Involvement: A Saskatchewan Perspective. Prepared for the Department of the Environment, Government of Saskatchewan. Undated. A brief report, but with considerable substance. The report reviews various types of public involvement and briefly describes some of the various techniques.

Ministry of Forests, Province of British Columbia. Public Involvement Handbook. Prepared by Dr. Bruce Fraser. 1981. Information Services, Victoria, British Columbia. This manual is a "workbook" on public involvement in the forestry sector. An easy to use manual guiding practition-ers in public involvement, well illustrated with diagrams and a fictional example drawn from the forest industry. The guidelines suggested are applicable to many situations beyond the forest sector.

Constructive Citizen Participation - a quarterly newsletter containing news items about the field from across Canada and the U.S., articles on techniques, case studies, and book reviews.

Advisory Groups

Widditsch, Ann, Guide 2: Working Effectively with Advisory Committees, Washington D.C., U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 1977. A very good short guide on working with advisory groups.

Interviewing

Richardson, S.A., et al, Interviewing, New York: Basic Books,

1964. An overview of general methodology.

Issues Management

Wilson, Ian. "The Benefits of Environmental Analysis," in Albert, Kenneth J. Ed. The Strategic Management Handbook, McGraw Hill 1983, pp. 9-1 to 9-19.

Coates, F.F. Issues Management. Lomond Publications, 1986.

Thomas, Philip S. "Environmental Scanning - The State of the Art".

Mediation

Talbott, Allan R., Settling Things: Six Case Studies in Environmental Mediation, Washington, D.C.: The Conservation Foundation and the Ford Foundation, 1983. A discussion of the use of mediation in an effort to resolve six environmental controversies.

Meetings

Ragan, James F., Guide 1: Effective Public Meetings, Washington D.C.: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 1977. A good short summary of what it takes to plan a public meeting.

Doyle, Michael and David Strauss, How to Make Meetings Work, Chicago, Illinois: Playboy Press, 1976. A best-selling book on designing and facilitating public meetings.

Polls

Babbie, Earl R., Survey Research Methods, Belmont, California: Wadsworth, 1973. An introduction to the field of survey research.

Small Group Meeting Techniques

Gordon, W.J., Synectics, New York: Harper & Row, 1961. An excellent discussion of brainstorming techniques.

Delbecq, Andre L. and Andrew H. Van de Ven, "A Group Process Model for Problem Identification and Program Planning", Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, Vol. 7, Number 4. A complete description of Nominal Group Process.